

Minimize your home hazards to your back

Question: Do you have any suggestions on how I can reduce the injuries to my back from working around the house? It seems every time I move furniture or work an appliance I re-injure my back.

Answer: There used to be a statistic that most accidents occur within a mile of your home. I believe most accidents occur in the home. With a little ingenuity and planning most of these injuries can be prevented.

My first suggestion is to stand in each room and evaluate what actions and functions occur most often. Next assess which common occurrences have potential injury to your back. An example would be reviewing your dining room. Are the chairs the right height for your table? Are there areas to rest trays or plates when serving? Is there enough walking space so you are not banging into furniture?

Here are some other ideas, especially if you are building or purchasing a new home and can start immediately with an ergonomically sound home. A front-loading washing machine is better for your back than a top loader if it is used correctly. You don't have to tug out the laundry while your back is bent. You can bend your knees instead of your back.

A mattress with independently sprung coils would be better than the older models without any coils. Sagging or broken down filled mattresses are potential hazards to your spine because your body conforms to the sags and irritates the muscles of your back while you sleep. This leads to achy back muscles and or subluxations of the vertebra of the spine.

Some other basic tips include moving heavy bottles from the top shelf of the refrigerator to the waist-level shelves to avoid having to arch or bend the back while lifting. Stay away from lifting the heavy Calaphon-type pots and pans and replace them with lighter weight cookware. Always avoid and be aware for aluminum in your pans because it is extremely toxic to your health and can lead to Alzheimer's disease. Higher elevated dishwashers, microwaves, wall ovens also allow you to avoid unnecessary bending and twisting. Always consider your children and other family members when designing your home to be back friendly.

Children should not have to climb on counters or tables to get to appliances or into cabinets. Keep their items or commonly used appliances at a level where they don't have to bend or over reach.

Should you injure your back in the home, don't take it lightly. Any spinal irritation is a true concern. Call your chiropractor and have your spine checked immediately to determine if treatment is necessary.

Quote of the week: *"The opportunities of man are only limited by his imagination."* – Charles Kettering