

Proper countertop height prevents back pain

Question: I don't get low-back pain until after my morning activities in the bathroom. Could there be something I am doing that causes my low-back pain?

Answer: When you sleep your body retains fluid in areas of irritation. The purpose of this natural mechanism is to engorge the irritated area with minerals and vitamins. This is why patients with arthritis feel stiff and swollen in the morning often. An athlete might experience this phenomenon the morning after playing a sport or doing a vigorous activity. Because we retain fluid we feel stiff and inflexible at the outset of our day. Once our metabolism starts to kick in the fluid dissipates out of the injured sites and is eliminated by the body. This can be influenced by simple taking a hot shower or bath. Getting prepared for our day in the bathroom can become a ritual of events including shaving, brushing our teeth, combing our hair, etc.

I have observed that patients that have morning back pain either don't allow their metabolism to get moving or they don't warm up the temperature of their body prior to doing their morning rituals. I believe that improper mechanics in the bathroom can not only contribute to an existing back problem but also actually create a new problem.

Leaning forward at an improperly arranged countertop can predispose the spine to irritation. The height of your countertop should not cause you to lean forward to perform your activities. Most countertop heights are standard and made for people that are relatively short on the average. A tall person is forced to lean forward as they perform their bathroom rituals. Very short people are at

the same disadvantage because they have to lean forward with their necks to reach the faucet and controls. The first solution to minimizing the potential dangers in the bathroom is to design the height of your countertop to a height that does not force you to bend forward from either your waist or neck.

Keep items in your shower at arms reach so you don't have to bend lift or twist. Be conscious of your body positioning when in the bathroom. Women have a tendency to spend more time in the bathroom than men. Maintaining a postural correct stance can reduce back problems.

Do most of your activities after your shower so your metabolism has been influenced to start circulating blood to your extremities and brain.

Should you feel pain or tightness in the morning, doing some stretching or yoga after your shower and before spending time in the bathroom will help reduce pain. Starting your day out without back or neck pain can be as easy as having the correct countertops.

Quote of the week: *“Waste of time is the most extravagant and costly expenses.”* – Anonymous