

Back Care

This brochure provides helpful information on keeping your back healthy and preventing injury. Proper body mechanics along with energy conserving tips are outlined. Your therapist will review this information and answer any questions you may have. We hope you find this booklet useful not only during your hospital stay but after you go home.

Spine Guidelines

Follow these guidelines until instructed otherwise by your doctor.

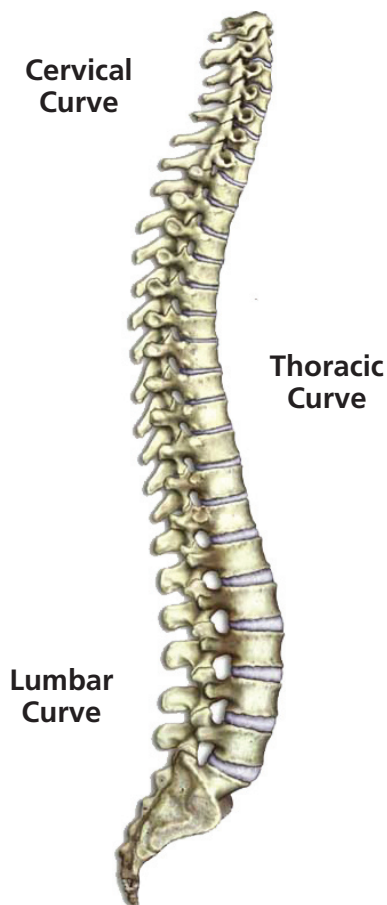
- Avoid twisting at lumbar/waist level.
- Do not lie on your stomach.
- Do not lift anything over 5 lbs. (About the weight of a half gallon of milk.)
- Avoid sitting for long periods of time. (Stand up every 20 to 30 minutes.)
- Limit bending forward. Avoid positions that would require you to “round” your back.

Check with your doctor about when you can resume driving, sex and routine exercise.

Application of Basic Guidelines

Lifting/Carrying

- Avoid twisting. Do not allow the weight of objects to pull your shoulders forward.
- When carrying objects, hold them close to your body.
- Slide or wheel objects rather than carry them.
- Know the weight of the object prior to lifting. If it is too heavy, get help.
- Push rather than pull objects.
- When moving many items, divide the load. Make more trips with lighter loads to decrease overall exertion.



- Use the strength of your arms and legs when lifting objects.

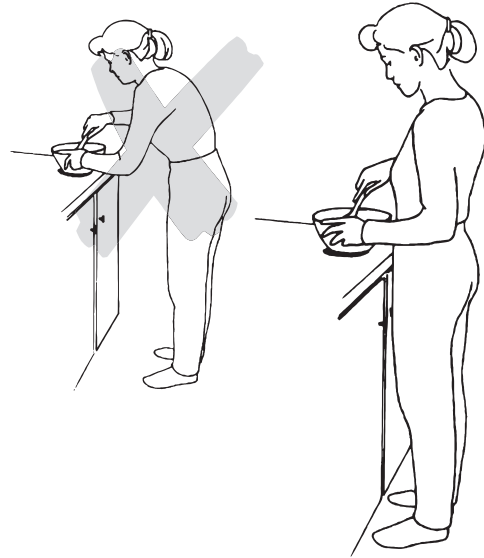


- Bend with your knees and hips. Keep back straight to maintain the natural shape of your spine.

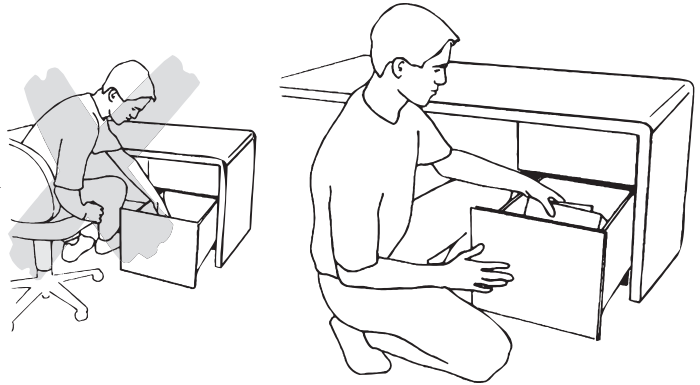


Reaching

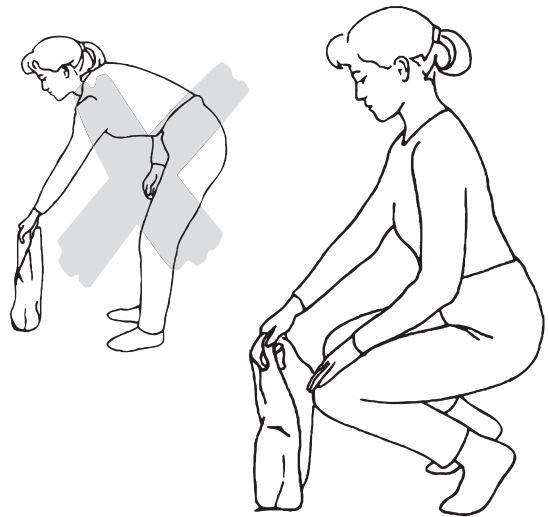
- Organize your work area so that items used most often are easy to see and to reach.
- When reaching, position your body directly in front of the object (between your hips and chest).



- Avoid overreaching – not further than an arm's reach away.



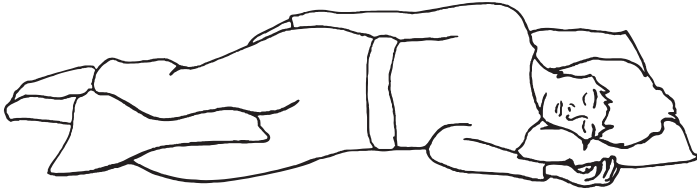
- When picking up objects from floor, keep back straight and bend knees.



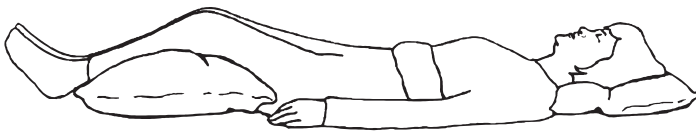
Sleeping

Sleep on a firm mattress.

- While on your side, place a pillow under your head and another between your knees.



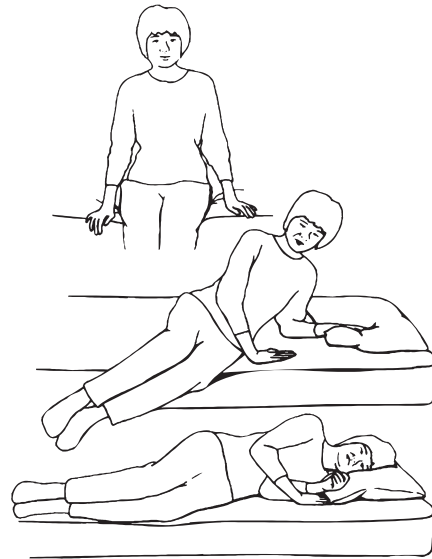
- While on your back, place a pillow under your head and another under your knees.



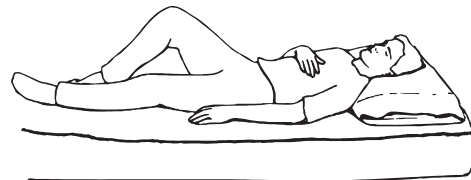
“Log roll” into bed

- First sit at the edge of the bed.

- Slowly move your legs up onto the bed as you lower the rest of your body on its side.

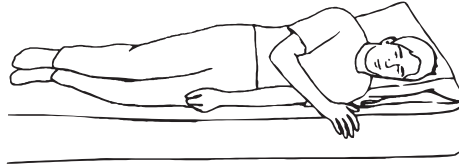


- Then roll onto your back by bending the knee closest to the edge of the bed to help propel your body. Keep your spine straight – do not twist.

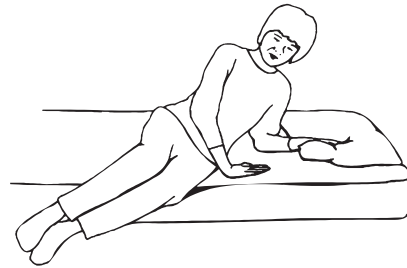


Exiting your bed

- Roll from your back onto your side, keeping your spine straight. Bend the knee closest to the center of the bed to help propel your body.



- Then push up with your arms.

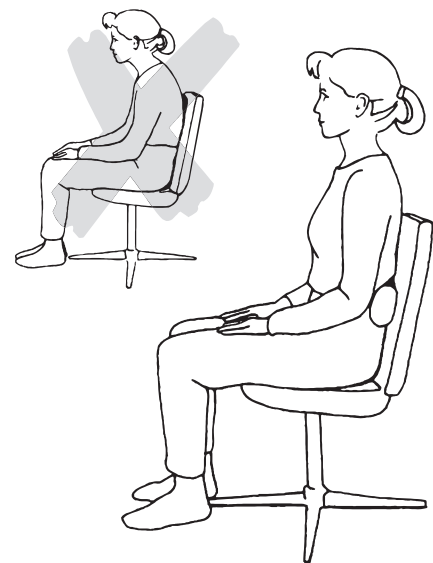


- Slowly lower your legs to the floor (be sure to keep shoulders and hips aligned – do not twist).



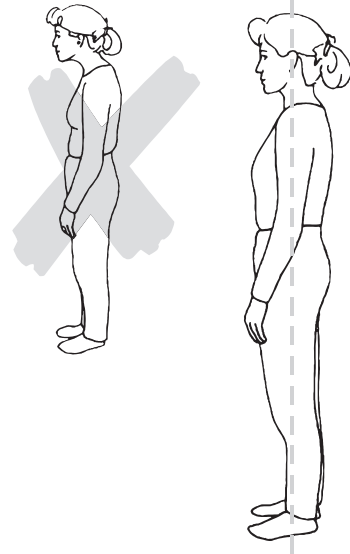
Sitting

- Sit in a firm chair with arms (kitchen or dining room chair). Feet should be flat on the floor with knees no higher than your hips.
- Sit with your back firmly against the chair, feet touching the floor.
- Avoid soft surfaces that do not provide support (e.g., soft sofa).
- Distribute weight evenly on both hips.
- Plan workspace. Consider proper work height when seated and using a chair that supports your back.
- Avoid staying in sitting position for prolonged periods of time. (Stand up every 20 to 30 minutes.)

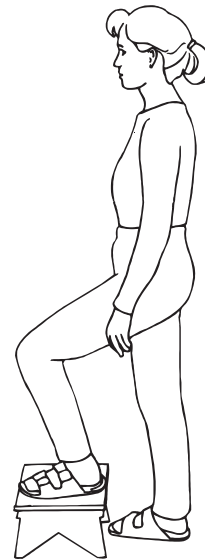


Standing

- When standing, distribute weight evenly on both feet. For comfort, you may place one foot slightly in front of the other.



- Keep shoulders and hips aligned while keeping feet shoulder width apart (knees should not be locked). When standing for long periods at a table or workspace, place one foot on stool.



Walking

Walking is an excellent form of exercise after surgery. (Follow your doctor's guidelines.)

- Remember to let your arms swing at your sides as you walk.
- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Walk with good posture.
- When climbing stairs, let your legs do all the work. Use the rails for support only. Do not pull your body up with your arms.

Energy Conservation

Energy conservation employs short cuts, proper body mechanics, and energy saving methods in performing tasks.

Pre-plan work tasks:

- Balance work, recreation, and rest.
- Plan your time well; vary light and heavy tasks throughout the day.
- Plan time for short rest breaks.
- Do away with unnecessary tasks.
- Avoid excessive loads and use of heavy equipment.
- Make sure you are well rested before taking a shower. This is important during your first few weeks at home.
- Ask for help as needed.

Use organized workstations:

- Have all needed equipment and supplies within easy reach.
- When possible, avoid bending, stooping, and overreaching.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.

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