

Back to work with a back condition.



New York Life Group Benefit Solutions (NYL GBS) knows that returning to work after a back condition can be stressful. If you're feeling anxious about returning to your regular work activities, please use the information below to learn more about back injuries, tips to stay healthy, and do's and don'ts of taking care of your back.

Back injuries are the most common cause of back pain.

Most people will have a minor back problem at one time or another, and most back problems occur in adults ages 20 to 50.¹

An initial episode of back pain typically occurs between 30 and 50 years of age, and the likelihood of having low back pain increases with age.¹

Preventing a back injury is just as important for someone who has not had one yet as it is for someone who has been injured before.

Computer care tips

If you sit in front of a computer all day, follow these tips:

- Adjust your screen to be one arm's length away from your body.
- Have the top of the screen at eye level so you aren't straining your neck.
- Place the keyboard right underneath your hands, with your wrists and forearms straight and parallel to the floor and shoulders relaxed.
- Keep your elbows close to your body and bent at a 90° angle.

Stay strong. Stay healthy.

It is much easier to prevent a back injury than to recover from one. Some helpful ways to prevent a new injury is by using your body correctly and improving the way you sit and stand. This will help you protect your back and be more comfortable at work.

Straighten up

Good posture, which is making sure each part of your body is lined up in the right position, is important for preventing back injuries. When your body is properly aligned, your joints and muscles can share the load of your body weight. That way, a single joint or muscle isn't taking on more weight than its share.

The ABC's of good posture

"S" curve

Good posture, when viewed from the side, gives your spine an "S"-like curve. It shows a gentle curve at your neck and the small of your back.

"C" curve

Bad posture, when viewed from the side, gives your spine a "C" curve. Your shoulders look rounded forward, forcing the muscles and tendons in the lower back to work harder. This creates stress between the joints.

The do's and don'ts of back care.

No matter what type of work you do, here are some basic tips for caring for your back on the job.

	Do's	Don'ts
Sitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sit tall, shoulders back, without arching your back.• Fully support your back with lumbar support.• Support thighs and hips with a well-padded seat that's parallel to the floor.• Keep knees about the same height as hips, with feet slightly forward.• Place feet flat on floor or on a footrest, with knees at 90°.• Get up every 15 minutes and stretch for 15 seconds.• Walk around every 30 minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't slouch or slump with rounded shoulders.• Don't sit on the forward part of the seat.• Don't cradle a phone between your shoulder and head.• Don't sit in one position for more than 15 minutes.
Standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep your head level, in-line with your torso.• Relax your shoulders and let your upper arms hang normally at your sides.• Alternate putting one foot up on a step or even a phone book to take pressure off of your spine.• Wear flat-heeled, supportive footwear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't slump forward (creating a "C" curve in your spine).• Don't shift your body weight to one side with your hip pushed out.• Don't wear high heels (they force the spine out of alignment).
Bending and lifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bend from the hips and knees.• Point your feet straight ahead.• Lift straight up using legs and arms, not back.• Keep the weight close to your body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't bend from the waist.• Don't point your feet outward or inward.• Don't lift heavy objects by yourself.• Don't twist your back and then lift, push or pull items.

Ask for help.

It's not always easy to ask someone for help. But in your case, with a back injury, asking for assistance can help you recover faster and prevent another injury.

If you need help lifting something, ask a coworker to lend a hand. And, if you need to make changes to your job to avoid hurting your back again, work with your doctor and your manager to see what options are available to you.

¹National Institute of Health, "Back Pain", NINDS, March 2023.

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