

## Tips for Better Spine Health

- 1) **Exercise Regularly:** Regular exercise and strengthening activities will promote a healthier, stronger and more stable spine. Start exercising slowly to give your muscles a chance to warm up. Check with your doctor prior to engaging in an exercise program.
- 2) **Eat Healthy:** Proper nutrition will support spine development and repair. A proper diet maintains bone density and strengthens muscles, ligaments and tendons.
- 3) **Maintain Optimum Body Weight:** Excessive body weight increases stress on all aspects of the spine. Vegetarians and Vegans can still be overweight.
- 4) **Drink Water:** An adequate amount of water is vital to good health.
- 5) **Avoid Smoking:** Smoking promotes tissue inflammation and impairs the healing process. Smoking is an independent risk factor for spine degeneration. E-cigarettes and Vaporizers still contain harmful ingredients that can impair the spine.
- 6) **Marijuana:** Research on marijuana and spine health is underway. Marijuana has become a pain management option and is being legalized recreationally in many states. Smoking marijuana has been associated with many medical problems including lung cancer. Small size studies have investigated potential anti-inflammatory properties of non-inhaled cannabis, however no correlation between marijuana and spine health has been established.
- 7) **Maintain Good Posture:** Posture is important while lying, sitting and standing to reduce abnormal strain on your spine to reduce the risk of injury.
- 8) **Wear a Supportive Bra:** A supportive bra reduces neck and upper back strain.
- 9) **Increase Abdominal Strength:** The abdominal muscles support the low back and pelvis. Strengthening these muscles increase spine stability.
- 10) **Invest in Good Chairs:** Chairs influence sitting posture. Proper low back support maintains good posture.
- 11) **Invest in a Good Pillow and Mattress:** Good pillows and mattresses promote good sleep. What is most important is finding items that feel good to you. More expensive is not always better.

- 12) **Sleep on Your Back or Side:** Belly down sleeping is less supportive on your spine.
- 13) **Good Sleep Support:** Place a pillow between your knees when sleeping on your side to reduce low back rotation.
- 14) **Maintain Spine Flexibility:** Regular stretching and activity maintains flexibility of the spine and reduces risk of injury.
- 15) **Balanced Carrying:** Attempt to carry items in a balanced fashion to avoid extra stress on one side of the spine. Avoid overloading one side of your body with luggage, a backpack or a purse.
- 16) **Use Proper Lifting Techniques:** Proper lifting by keeping a straight back and lifting with the hips and legs reduces stress on the low back. Face the object you are lifting. Hold the object close to the body. Avoid lifting higher than your waist. Avoid twisting while lifting. Push rather than pull an object. Seek help when lifting heavy objects.
- 17) **Avoid High-Impact Activities:** Shocks on your body are absorbed by all joints including the spine. Contact sports, motorcycles and bicycles are independent risk factors for spine injury and promoting spine arthritis.
- 18) **Take Periodic Breaks:** Avoid sustained postures by taking breaks to stretch your legs and back.
- 19) **Walk Efficiently:** Walking requires use of all the muscles of the spine and pelvis. Walk erect with your head and neck in a neutral position. Avoid slumping while walking and maintain good posture. Avoid high heels and platform shoes.
- 20) **Use Proper Phone Technique and Equipment:** Avoid holding the phone between the neck and shoulder. Use a headset or speakerphone for prolonged use.
- 21) **Proper Shoes and Footwear:** Foot and ankle support reduces stress on the hips, knees and low back.
- 22) **Seek an Optimum Work Environment:** Adjust your workstation to maintain good spine posture. If possible, adjust the computer screen to eye level. Adjust your chair or desk height to properly use a keyboard and mouse. A footrest may reduce stress on the spine. Maintain a supportive posture.
- 23) **Listen to Your Back:** Avoid positions and activities which increase back

or leg pain. If you are involved in an activity that causes or increases back pain, try to change something to alleviate the pain.

24) **Learn to Relax:** Relaxation techniques and stress management reduces muscle tension.