

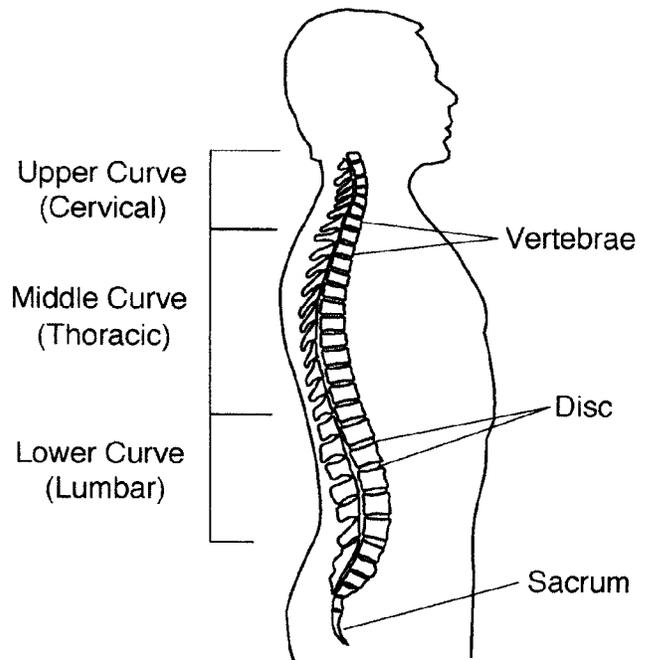
# Back Health and Safety

Your back works all of the time, even when you are asleep. Over time, poor posture, movements and lack of exercise can lead to back problems. You can prevent most back problems if you use your back the correct way and exercise safely.

## Your back

Your back is made up of bones, discs, muscles, ligaments and nerves.

- Bones of the spine include 24 bones called vertebrae, and a larger bone called the sacrum or tailbone. These bones form 3 curves.
- Discs on top of each vertebra are like cushions. Regular exercise helps keep discs healthy.
- Muscles of the back, stomach, buttock and thigh give support to the back. If these muscles are weak, pulled, or tight, you may have problems with your back.
- Ligaments are tough elastic bands that hold bones together. Repeated stress on ligaments can lead to injury.
- Nerves coming from the spine tell muscles when to move and cause pain when there is a problem.



## How to keep your back healthy

Use these tips to keep your spinal curves in balance to decrease your chances of back injury.

### When Standing

Look straight ahead and keep your ears in line with your shoulders. Your hips and knees are straight. The lower curve in your back is present but not curved too much. Limit twisting at the waist. Turn your body by moving your feet.



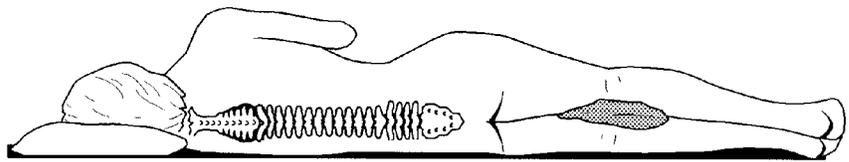
## When Sitting

Keep your hips, knees and ankles at a 90 degree angle. Sit up straight in a chair. Do not slouch. Use a pillow or rolled up towel if you need support for the lower curve of your spine.



## When Lying Down

A firm, but not hard surface best supports the spinal curves. Sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees is the best position for your back. If you sleep



on your back, support your neck on a pillow and have a pillow under your arm. If you sleep on your stomach, use a thin pillow under your stomach and bend one leg to the side.

## When Lifting

Keep your back straight while bending and lifting. Use your leg and buttock muscles to lift. Bend the hips and knees, not the back, and squat when you lift an object. Keep the object close to your body. Straighten your legs and do not twist as you return to a standing position.

