



factsheet



Looking after your back - information for carers

Factsheet 605 – 12 February 2010 (5 pages)

Carers look after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail, or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid.

Carers are often involved in manual handling tasks with the person they care for and sometimes this can lead to stresses and strains being placed on the joints, back and neck. This strain could lead to injury so it is important to lift and move properly.

This factsheet will help you find support and advice to keep your back strong and healthy.

Where to get information about looking after your back
Devon Carers Link provides support and information to carers. Carers Link provide information on training opportunities available to carers and works in partnership with other organisations. It enables carers to access training on practical caring skills such as moving and handling.

Membership to Devon Carers Link is free and confidential. Any carer can join whatever your age or the needs of the person you care for.

For more information and to find out how to become a member of Carers Link, please call 08456 431341 or visit the website www.devoncarerslink.org.uk

Training

Carers can access free training in safe techniques for lifting people, by contacting:-

Devon Care Training on 01392 381655 or dctc@devon.gov.uk where you can seek advise on where your nearest workshop is being held.

St. John Ambulance provide a carer support programme in various locations across Devon. This programme provides training on various practical skills including safer moving and handling. For details contact Emma Healey on 01392 822646 or email: emma.healey@devon.sja.org.uk

GP Practice

If you experience problems with your back you should seek medical advice from your GP. Your GP may refer you to an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for specialist advice.

Leaving Hospital

The Hospital Discharge Team should make arrangements for appropriate training, support and equipment to be organised before the person you care for is discharged from hospital. If

you have any concerns about managing at home then you should ask for support and advice when the discharge date is being discussed.

Top tips for preventing back & neck problems

- **Remember – avoid lifting wherever possible.**
- **Plan the task ahead to make sure it is safe to carry out.**
- **Maintain a good posture, keeping your spine in line.**
- **Bend your knees and keep your feet firmly on the ground with your feet apart.**
- **Place your feet in the direction in which you are moving.**
- **If you are moving something towards you or away from you then put one foot in front of the other.**
- **If moving from right to left, put feet astride.**
- **If you are turning, put one foot pointing at the weight and the other to where you are going.**
- **To turn round, do not twist your back but move your feet round so that you are facing in the right direction.**
- **Keep the load close to you.**
- **Use the large buttock muscles and your thighs to provide the power for lifting or moving, not the small muscles in your back.**
- **Do not lift anything that you know is too heavy for you.**
- **Do not try to lift someone up off the floor if they have fallen. If they are uninjured, make them comfortable and give them time to recover from the initial shock of the fall.**

If the person on the floor can manage to get over onto their hands and knees, use of a dining style chair may enable them to get up off the floor. Do not use an upturned chair as that would not be stable enough.

- Keeping fit and keeping your muscles in good tone is essential in preventing neck and back problems.

It is very important to care for your back. If in doubt about any element of moving and handling the person you care for, seek advice on the best methods to use as well as equipment that may make the move easier and safer.

Further Information

See www.devon.gov.uk/devoncares for:

- further information on carers' issues
- young carers development workers
- a range of support and services for carers

You can also call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk for a 24 hour helpline and information about health problems.

Further factsheets can be found online at www.devon.gov.uk/factsheets

**If you have any further questions please contact Care Direct
0845 1551 007**

A large print version of this factsheet is available at

www.devon.gov.uk/largeprint-factsheets

**but if you would like it in a different format such as Braille or
audio, or in a different language, please contact our Customer
Service Centre on 0845 155 1015 or email:**

customer@devon.gov.uk

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