12 Get as comfortable as you can in the car. Long commutes can be hard on your back. Adjust your seat and position your arms so that you can easily reach the steering wheel. Use a pillow in the seat if needed to support your lower back curve. Remember to stop to take stretch breaks when on a long trip.

13 Sleep on a firm mattress providing good support for your back and neck curves. Place a pillow under your knees when on your back, or between your knees if you are on your side.

14 Back injuries can result from use of bad postures and poor movement patterns. Always use good mechanics when lifting either a heavy box or a light newspaper.

15 Stay in good shape. Exercise, do daily stretches and watch your weight. Extra weight, muscle weakness, or muscle imbalances due to tightness can affect your posture and result in back discomfort or pain.

16 How Do I Get Help?

Contact the Industrial Hygiene Division at Environment, Health & Safety:

Visit our website at http://blink.ucsd.edu/go/ergo OR send email to EHSIH@ucsd.edu

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Environment Health & Safety
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15 WAYS
TO SAVE YOUR BACK
1. Always try to maintain the natural curves in your back. These curves provide strength and support for your back. This is especially important when lifting or when sitting for long periods of time.

2. Hinge at your hips and bend your knees when lifting. You should be doing most of the work with your legs rather than with your back! Placing your feet shoulder width apart will help you stay balanced. A wider stance can also help if you have difficulty bending your knees.

3. Tighten your stomach muscles before you lift. They help support and stabilize your back when you lift.

4. Plan ahead before lifting and test the weight first. Many injuries result from poor planning and overexertion.

5. Keep objects close when lifting and carrying them. A 10-pound bag of groceries can put 100 pounds of pressure on your low back. Holding things away from your body greatly increases this pressure.

6. When possible, use your hand and arm for added support when bending and lifting. Use a golfer's lift to retrieve light objects or when reaching into low containers like a hamper or shopping cart.

7. Pivot with your feet when lifting or transporting objects. Turn your whole body instead of twisting your spine - especially if you are holding something heavy. Your nose should always be in line with your toes.

8. Balance objects when you carry them and use dollies and carts for heavy items whenever you can. Use your body weight and push the dolly or cart with your legs rather than pulling with your back.

9. When sitting, sit all the way back in the chair seat against the backrest. Let the chair do some of the work for you - no slumping allowed!!!

10. Use a bookstand or a copyholder to elevate reading materials. Looking down puts a tremendous strain on the neck and upper back.

11. Change positions frequently when sitting or standing for prolonged periods. When standing, use a footstool to prop one foot up and switch sides every so often. When at a sink or counter, see if you can open one of the cabinets and put one foot on the bottom shelf.