

# 4 Sneaky Reasons Your Back Hurts

You may not realize it, but these everyday activities are causing back pain. Here's what they are and how to avoid them.



Ever bend down to pick up a dust bunny or whatever and then — agh! — something gets tweaked on the way up? "Back pain is one of the most common reasons **women** see their doctors, and a full 80 percent of people will suffer from an episode in their lifetime," says Martin Leland, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon at the University of Chicago Medical Center. But you *can* outsmart these surprising triggers:

## **YOUR CUTE FLATS**

Some ballet-style flats can cause more pain than you'd imagine. Ultra-thin soles don't absorb the shock of your steps. "The discs in your lower back are filled with

**cushiony fluid**, but walking in flimsy shoes all day long wrings them out like a sponge."

## **KIDS!**

If you have little ones, chances are you schlep them around more than they use their own two feet. That extra 20, 30, or 40 pounds can overload back muscles, which tighten up to keep you standing straight. The best way to tote any size tot? "On one hip, **switching sides** periodically to help keep things balanced,".

## **YOUR CELL PHONE**

Yammer all you want, just don't pin the phone between your ear and your shoulder. "You're forcing your spine to **stretch** to its limits, and that can make your upper back sore,". If you typically need your hands to be free, switch to a headset.

## **SITTING STILL**

Staying in the same basic position for eight hours (say, if you're desk-bound) can stress your back. The fix: Adjust yourself periodically to allow alternate muscles to take over, so the same ones don't contract all day. Prop a phone book or a big dictionary **under** your computer monitor (it shouldn't be above eye level) and one under your feet. As the day goes on, remove one book, then, a few hours later, the other. And be sure to take a lunch break! And most importantly, make sure your spine is checked on a regular basis. All the massaging and drugs in the world are not going to correct a misalignment.

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