

Sedentary life can cause back pain

More than 80 per cent of Indians suffer from back pain at some point in their lives. Simple lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of backaches. Here is what **Dr Saikat Sarkar**, orthopaedic surgeon and spine expert, suggests.

Lifestyle change

Lack of physical activity weakens muscles and strains the spine. And lack of exercise can lead to obesity. Excess weight puts additional pressure on the spine, leading to back pain. It is therefore essential you make exercise a part of your life. Walk when the weather and circumstances permit.

Those who spend long hours at the desk, do take a break every 45-60 minutes. A minute or two of walking is enough. If you can't spare the time, get up and stretch.

Cultivating some simple habits can reduce your chances of getting a "tech neck" — stiffness and soreness in the neck and shoulders, persistent headaches, muscle fatigue or weakness in the upper back and neck, and reduced range of motion, making it harder to turn the head. Keep screens at eye level so you don't have to look down at them. Strengthen your neck and upper back muscles to improve support for your spine.

If you do not use an ergonomic chair, use a lumbar pillow. It helps maintain the curve of the spine and keeps back pain away.

Bone density

We attain maximum bone density between the ages of 30 and 35. The higher your bone density is during this time, the better your bone health will be in your later years. To ensure optimum bone densi-

ty at 35 years, have enough dairy products for calcium intake and take Vitamin D supplements.

Vitamin D

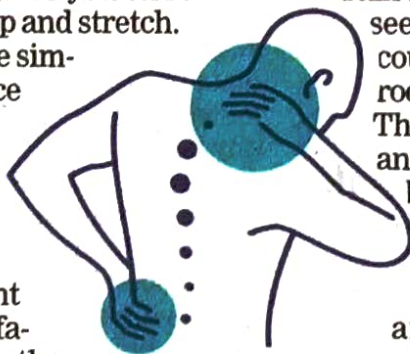
This is essential for calcium absorption. Our skin can synthesise Vitamin D from sunlight but the more melanin your skin has, the longer it takes to synthesise the vitamin. Indians have to expose 18 per cent of the body to sunlight for 30 minutes to produce enough Vitamin D. Unfortunately, only those who work bare-bodied in the sun expose that much skin. The rest of us are all deficient in the sunshine vitamin and must take one supplement a week.

Red flags

Many of us ignore slight neck pain or back pain. But if the pain radiates to the hips or legs and neck pain radiates to the arms, see a doctor at once. It could be a sign of nerve roots being compressed. This is caused by wear and tear of the spine or by the swelling of the discs that cushion the vertebrae.

Apart from neck and back pain, the other major complaint is of knee pain, leading eventually to knee replacement surgery. If we take a little care of our knees, the wear and tear will be less and surgery will not be the only treatment. If you already have knee issues, avoid standing for long hours or taking the stairs. Teachers, unfortunately, have to do both and are therefore the most impacted by this problem.

Take care of your bone health — exercise regularly, maintain ideal weight, correct posture, and take enough Vitamin D and calcium. There are no magic pills here; we just have to implement what we already know.



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