5 Ways to Avoid Back Pain

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Oh, my aching back! If you've ever thought or said that, this post is for you. Back pain accounts for an alarming amount of missed work in the U.S. each year, not to mention missed fun. Read on to learn five ways to avoid back pain.

1. **Quit it!** Yes, we may be sounding like a broken record by now, but quitting smoking is essential for your overall good health and the same goes for back pain. Smoking can increase chronic back pain for patients and it can also slow the healing process for surgery patients. So, toss the cigarettes for good!
2. **Ease up.** Your best bet for protecting your back is to avoid heavy lifting at all costs. However, if you do find it necessary to life something, always lift using your leg muscles and NOT your back muscles.
3. **Those few extra pounds.** A few extra inches around your belly makes your pelvis tilt forward, and out of alignment. This can cause a lot of extra strain on your lower back. So, aim to maintain a healthy weight and try to keep your Body Mass Index (BMI) around 30 or lower.
4. **Get up and get going.** By staying physically active and exercising often, you can actually reduce back pain and speed up recovery—just don't overdo it. Start with low impact exercises that go easy on your back like an elliptical trainer or walking to loosen muscles and ease stress.
5. **Sit up straight.** Your mother was right (again). Good posture goes a long way in reducing back pain by reducing stress on your spine. Poor posture can also lead to muscle, joint and disc issues. So, chin up, shoulders back and head forward.

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