

Tips for preventing & treating back pain.

“For people who are active and have never had back pain, it’s difficult to realize the importance of proactively protecting their spine,” says Anthony Mazlish, CEO of Healthy Back. “Once you’re hurt and you can’t do the things you love – like horseback riding – you realize how important it is to be proactive.”

While activity can injure your spine, so can sitting at a desk for long hours or even standing for long hours. Mazlish has tips to help with both:

1. Awareness

“If you’re constantly thinking about your back, you stand less chance of an injury,” says Mazlish.

While riding, it’s easy to get so caught up in what you and your horse are doing that you forget about your position and protecting your back. Quick movements while in the saddle can cause back injury. The action of the horse while cantering and jumping causes concussions on the spine.

Think also about the activities related to riding. People often injure their backs while on the ground lifting heavy buckets, saddles, etc. Heavy lifting will put pressure on the spine and can lead to wrenching the back.

“If you’re lifting heavy objects, you should be cautious,” Mazlish warns. “Just go slow. It’s those quick movements where you can injure or tear a muscle.”

2. Alternate Activity

“When at home or in the office, if you’re sitting for long hours, be sure to get up and walk around. And if you’re standing for long hours, be sure to take periodic breaks to sit,” advises Mazlish.

Doing anything sedentary for a long period of time will put pressure on your spine and prohibit blood flow. If you’re in a barn all day, do some bending exercises to stretch your spine. Squats also provide an opportunity to take pressure off of your back and use your legs.

3. Use Foot Stools

Grandma was right to have all those footstools around the house! Elevating your feet, even slightly, helps relieve stress on your lower back.

“It may sound extremely simple, but foot stools – ones that go under your desk, too – take a lot of pressure off of the spine,” says Mazlish.

4. Refrain from Heavy Lifting

If you do have to lift something, bend your knees and try not to put all of the pressure on your spine.

“Lift gradually,” Mazlish says, “so that you don’t suddenly force something and pull muscles. Parents should be careful when lifting their children, too.”

5. Support Your Back

“It’s important to support your back no matter where you’re sitting – in your truck, in a car, on a plane, etc.,” Mazlish states. Healthy Back’s self-inflating, portable back rest, the Travel PAL, is one example.

6. Check Your Posture

It's easy to get into a slouched position, especially near the end of the day. While it may feel great at the time, you risk causing stress and fatigue on muscles and vertebrae. Check your posture periodically to make sure you are standing and sitting upright. If you are driving, change your hand position on the steering wheel occasionally and move your neck around. Also, make sure your car or truck seat is in the best possible position so that your knees are slightly bent.

"Watching your posture is essential to maintaining the health of your spine," advises Mazlish.

7. S-T-R-E-T-C-H

Stretch your legs and your back as often as possible throughout the day. Riding puts pressure on the spine so you want to be sure to relieve it by stretching. If you can, bending over to touch your toes is simple and effective.

You should try to stretch every 20-30 minutes after riding and at least every 45 minutes to an hour when driving or during the day. Make sure you get out at least once a day and take a brisk walk.

8. Travel with Hot and Cold Packs

"Travel is tough on everyone, but it can be impossible for people with back pain," says Mazlish.

Flying is particularly hard on your spine, especially if it is a long flight. Be sure to stretch as much as you can on the plane – do plenty of foot circles and stand up at least every 45 minutes and bend to touch your toes – but it's hard to do much else on a plane.

If your back does begin to hurt, applying hot and cold packs can bring relief. You can bring a plastic bag or ice bag with you and ask the flight attendant to fill it with ice, or you can purchase the latest cold packs that don't require any refrigeration or freezing. You can also bring hot wraps that are activated when opened. For long international flights or extremely long drives, it

is smart to pack these and have them readily available the minute your back begins to feel tight.

9. Take Advantage of Massage

Massage is extremely important for all types of athletes, including riders. It not only improves stressed and aching muscles, it also greatly improves circulation and proactively protects muscle tissue. If you're flying to your destination, many large airports have booths for seated massage. This is a beneficial way to kill time between flights and proactively ensure your back stays healthy. If you're driving and your destination hotel has a spa, you can ease your sore back muscles with massage therapy.

10. Exercise

If you're not suffering from back pain, get to the gym. Cross-training will help strengthen back muscles, increase circulation, improve cardio and will have a positive impact on your riding position. If you do have back pain, a physical therapist can provide exercises that will strengthen your back without further injury.

11. Be cautious about jumping down or other quick exertion

"Don't do what I did," cautions Mazlish, who jumped down off of a truck and injured his back. "If you need to get down from something, carefully ease yourself off of it."

Jumping can lead to overexertion and stress on the spine, which can cause a major injury and/or chronic pain. The key to avoiding back pain is to think before you make any quick movement that can lead to strain or worse. When hooking up that horse trailer or jumping down from the truck bed, be slow and cautious.

12. Find a good mattress

Healthy Back carries a variety of top mattresses that are designed to eliminate back pain and protect the spine.

Written by CRM

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“Few people realize the damage a bad mattress can have on your spine, your sleep and your health,” said Mazlish.

Article provided by Healthy Back. The company was established in 1994 by CEO Anthony Mazlish after seeking solutions for his own back pain and realizing that there were limited sources. The company, which opened its first store in Rockville, Md. in 1994, grew successfully over the years to become a national brand. Now with 10 stores throughout the Washington, D.C. region; San Diego, California and Lexington, Kentucky, as well as robust e-commerce, the company is nationally known for its many healthy back solutions and products including the best-selling Svago chair and a line of travel products including the Travel PAL. For more information, visit www.healthyback.com.