



Four steps to alleviating back pain

Most truckers get back pain at some point during the day because of day-in and day-out driving. You may not ever have had a back injury or did anything but sit most of the day in your truck or at a desk. However most back problems come from the business of life.

Repetitive activities are part of this life we live, such as sitting at a computer, or driving a truck many hours a day. You may not do much lifting and minimal carrying, but you still develop tension and muscle tightness and develop poor posture.

One surprisingly simple strategy can go a long way. And that is paying attention to your posture.

Just look at pictures when you were a teenager and compare to present photos. Guess what? You look different. Between 18 and 60 plus years of age you can expect to lose 2 inches in height just from aging and gravity alone

Stooped shoulders, rounded upper back and neck will now produce pain from the neck down to the hips.

The good news is that there is a way to help while driving the truck. There's a lot we can do to prevent this sort of problem. Staying healthy helps the most. Physical fitness and a healthy weight are important. However, one



surprisingly simple strategy can go a long way, and that is paying attention to your posture.

Posture is how you hold your body doing all the activities of daily life. As you might guess, driving a truck is not mentioned in activities of daily life unless you're a trucker suffering from pain caused by your poor posture of the spine vertebrae that are incorrectly aligned.

Harvard Health's four steps to better posture

Here is what the experts say. And I, Dr. John, do this daily in my truck. This can be done while driving and when you stop during the day. I made a few changes to Harvard's recommendation for a trucker to make his/her life better.

You can improve your posture – and head off back pain – by practicing some imagery and a few easy exercises.

1 IMAGERY. Picture a straight line passing through your body from ceiling of to the floor (your ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles should be even and line up vertically). Now imagine that a strong cord attached to the top of your head is pulling you upward, making you taller when you are driving or standing. Try to hold your pelvis level (this may require an adjustment in the seat bringing the back support forward. Don't allow the lower back to sway, and resist the urge to slump the back or the neck forward. Instead, think of stretching your head toward the ceiling, increasing the space between your rib cage and pelvis. Picture yourself as a ballerina or ice skater rather than a soldier at attention.

2 SHOULDER BLADE SQUEEZE. This is my favorite. Sit up straight in a chair/seat with your hands resting on your thighs. Keep your

shoulders down and your chin level. Slowly draw your shoulders back and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Hold for a count of five, and then relax. Repeat three or four times. Do this when walking, as well, since it also tightens your belly muscles.

3 UPPER-BODY STRETCH.

Stand facing a corner, like a corner of the trailer. Raise your arms, hands flat against the walls of the trailer, elbows at shoulder height. Place one foot ahead of the other. Bending your forward knee, exhale as you lean your body toward the corner. Keep your back straight and your chest and head up. You should feel a nice stretch across your chest. This always gives me a great pop in my upper back. Hold this position for 20 to 30 seconds. Relax.

4 ARM-ACROSS-CHEST STRETCH. Raise your right arm to shoulder level in front of you and bend the arm at the elbow, keeping the forearm parallel to the floor. Grasp the right elbow with your left hand and gently pull it across your chest so that you feel a stretch in the upper arm and shoulder on the right side.

Hold for 20 seconds, and then relax both arms. Repeat to the other side. Repeat three times on each side.

Practice these imagery and posture exercises throughout the day when stopped or in the shower. You might try to find a good trigger to help you remember, such as doing one or more of them when you get out of your truck or when stopped at a rest stop or red light. Soon it will become a habit, says Harvard Health.

For more on healing an aching back, look up “Back Pain, a Special



Health Report” from Harvard Medical School, my favorite source of good health care information. **LL**

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