



## A Healthy Back - Tips for Parents

One of the most common complaints of new moms and dads, aside from sleep deprivation, is a sore back. Picking up baby/toddler several times a day and holding for prolonged periods of time can strain even the strongest of backs. The repetitive lifting and holding of a baby/toddler may strengthen some areas like the arms, but poor body mechanics can actually weaken other susceptible areas such as the back. Here are some tips to help mom and dad keep from feeling the aches and pains of being new parents:

Avoid bending at the waist to pick up your child/baby or any other item. It is better to bend at the knees and crouch down. Think 'lift with your legs' even if you are lifting a light object. Lifting baby in/out from crib- Lower the side panel first, then stand near baby's upper body. With your legs at shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent, place one hand under baby's bottom and one hand supporting baby's neck. Gently lower/raise baby, keeping his/her head and spine in a straight line.

**Holding baby (standing)** - Stand with your legs at shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent and maintain a pelvic tilt. With the baby upright and close to your chest, support baby's head with one hand, with the other hand under baby's bottom for additional support.

**Holding baby/child (sitting)** - place a cushion behind your lower back and place your feet either flat on the floor or resting on an ottoman. Hold baby upright as described above. Try not to look down for prolonged periods and keep your shoulders back against your chair.

**Nursing/feeding** - Use a chair with comfortable arm rests and place a cushion behind your lower back. Place your feet either on the floor or resting on an ottoman. Use a nursing pillow or stack pillows so that baby is raised to a comfortable height. Try to keep your body aligned properly. Don't twist your upper body to fit where the baby is, instead, get yourself comfortable and place baby at a height and position that can be maintained for 20 to 30 minutes. Ensure that baby's head and spine are in line.

**Nursing/feeding (lying down)** - place a pillow behind your back, between your legs and under your head. Lay baby in the crook of your arm, facing you. Ensure that baby's head and spine are in line. Diapering - Your change table, or any other surface you use for diaper duty, should be at waist height, allowing you to keep your back straight and strong. The best place for safety is the floor – a place baby can't fall from.

**Bath time** – Don't let bathing your babe leave you with an aching back. By placing baby's tub on a broad, sturdy countertop or table will allow you to stand up straight the entire time.

**Strollers** - As you walk behind the stroller, your elbows should be slightly bent and your back straight. Ideally, your stroller should have adjustable handles so that they can be raised or lowered to waist level for whoever may be pushing it.

**Car seats** - Be very careful when getting your child in and out of the car seat. Try to stay in as neutral a body position as possible. If you are carrying the seat, carry it in front of you and not to one side. If you can avoid taking the car seat in and out by using a sling or stroller, do so.

**Picking up toys** - Once again, don't bend at the waist. Squat down and bend knees to pick up toys or play with your child.

**House cleaning** - Vacuuming, believe it or not, is one of the toughest tasks for your low back, especially the sacroiliac joints. This is due to the slight flexion at the waist. Our low back muscles are not strong in this position as so our sacroiliac joints and the ligaments supporting them are over taxed. You will feel a pain across your low back or to one side. To help - try standing more upright and extend the vacuum handle as far as possible.

**Sleeping** – even though the hours may be few at times, your body position is the key to making the most of your sleeping hours. Never sleep on your stomach. Sleep on your side or on your back with pillows supporting your bent knees and with a pillow that supports your neck not your head.

**Computer** – If you are on a computer all day at the office or at home in the evenings, be sure to watch your posture while you work and stretch your neck and shoulders so your muscles are relaxed when it is time to hold your baby. A great idea before you go to bed too.

If you feel a 'tweak' or a pull somewhere in your back, call your chiropractor. If your injury is manageable at home, he or she may be able to give you a quick tip on stretching or the use of heat/ice. Otherwise, don't just wait and let the problem get worse. That baby isn't getting any lighter!