



The Healthy Woman's Back

7 Life-Changing Tips



Yerman Chiropractic

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WELCOME TO A NEW AND IMPROVED YOU

When it comes to the health of the spine, one thing is clear.

Not all backs are the same. They may start out that way, until you add in all the stressors of life, which then cause the back to weaken and become misaligned. Our backs are ultimately a product of how we treat them on a day-to-day basis—what abuse we put them through, and then how we choose to restore and bring them back to alignment.

In other words, the health of our backs is usually a matter of how we live. In the same way a computer programmer will put different demands on her back than a mother of 5, or a teacher, or business owner, each of our lifestyles come with their own set of challenges and stressors.

The problems women face are not the same as what men face.

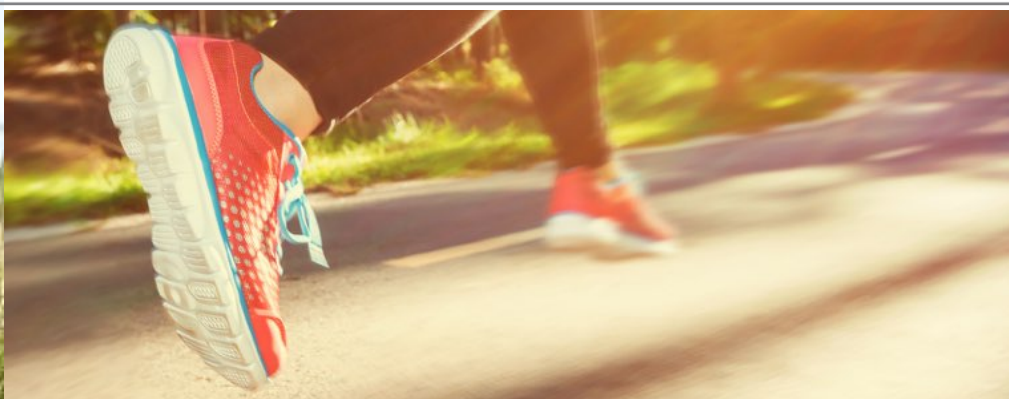
Women aren't just lawyers, doctors and firefighters. They're chefs, Uber drivers, hair dressers, therapists, social directors, personal shoppers, volunteers, and healers.

They also have to look damn good in a pair of high heels (more about that later).

Anyway you x-ray it, women have special issues when it comes to managing the health of their backs. It's why I wrote this guide, and why I have dedicated my practice to **female-centric chiropractic care**. As women, we have to recognize the inherent differences in our bodies, and how our emotions and lifestyles affect our health. Only then can we take the corrective action to restore health to our lives.

This guide contains 7 tips for a healthy woman's back. It's a way for you to take control of your own life, using preventive measures to keep you active and healthy.

So, keep your mind open, your back straight and let's begin.



TIP #1: LOSE THE HIGH HEELS

I know, blasphemy.

But, before you storm out the door in your Manolo Blahnik's, hear me out. There is a cost to those high heels, and not just to your pocketbook. But to your health.

Here are just a few possible repercussions:



✿ **Shortened Achilles Tendon**

According to many researchers, women who wear heels over a long period of time actually shorten their Achilles tendon and the muscles of the calves, leading to pain and muscle spasm, often of the lower back.

✿ **Lower Back Pain**

How do you feel after a long day of wearing heels? If you're like millions of other women, your feet may hurt, and your lower back will often be in pain. This makes perfect sense when you consider that wearing heels can cause your pelvis to push forward when you walk or stand, placing enormous pressure on the lower back.

✿ **Callouses & Ingrown Toenails**

Yes, this isn't a back pain issue, but in the interest of appealing to your vanity, I had to bring it up. So, what happens when you try to squish three inches of toes into a one-inch pointy shoe box? You create pressure on the sides of your feet and toes. Eventually, this is going to lead to a hardening of the skin. At the same time, high heels cause your feet to slide down and crush your toes, leading to ingrown toenails (not so pretty when you decide to swap those stilettos for cute summer sandals).

✿ **Falling and Sprained Ankles**

There's a reason why women accepting Academy Awards look like their one gust of wind away from falling off stage. High heels cause an unbalance between the ball of your foot and the heels, forcing you to put all your weight on the ankle. All it takes is a slight crack in the floor or pavement to wreak havoc.

LOSE THE HIGH HEELS (continued)

Ultimately, most patients intuitively feel like wearing high heels are bad for their spines, knees, ankles, and hips. The evidence overwhelmingly points in that direction. Of course, depending on your individual condition and history, this might or might not be true for you. Personally, I believe we all know if our bodies hurt more after wearing heels. We can do the math for ourselves.

And like anything else, we will also need to decide for ourselves if that pain is worth it, and if we will choose the good habits that bring alignment and health to our lives.

That being said, not everyone will need to give up high heels. But, this doesn't mean we should ignore the possible serious consequences. We can still take proactive steps to avoid long-term problems. Here's what you can do:



- Avoid wearing the same pair of shoes every day. Your shoes should fit properly and offer good arch and heel support.
- Avoid walking long distances in your high heels. If you walk to work, or park a long distance away, always wear comfortable sneakers, then slip on cuter shoes once you get to the office. Keep flats under your desk if you need to walk a lot at lunch.
- Wear soft insoles to reduce impact on your knees and hips. When Lehigh University researchers gave back-pain sufferers lightweight, flexible shoes with simple cushions, 80% reported significant relief within a year.
- Stretch your calf muscles and feet. Stand on the edge of a step with no shoes on. Keep the weight on the balls of your feet and your heels extending off the edge, slowly lower your heels off the end of the step so they are lower than your toes and you feel the stretch. Start this up on your toes and slowly lower heels below the bottom of the step.

Note: If this stretch is too difficult, put one leg in front of you and with the back leg keep your heel on the ground while you gently bend forward.

TIP #2: LIGHTEN THE PURSE



Believe me, I'm not trying to set women's fashion back to the dark ages, but that large purse your carrying (or lugging) could be a literal stone around your neck.

Besides causing upper back and neck pain it can even be a contributory cause for your headaches.

Think about it, if we carry something heavy on ONE shoulder, for hours a day, day in and day out, it eventually has to affect us in a negative way.

It is called "Micro-trauma," which is simply an injury to the muscle fibers caused by repetitive overuse.

Put another way: small irritations day in and day out can affect our body in the same way a big trauma will.

I recently ran a study in my office. I weighed every purse that came into our office for a month. **The average was 10 pounds. Some purses hit 16 pounds.** That's like carrying four bags of sugar (and just as lethal I might add). Or imagine carrying around a large watermelon all day, then having to balance it on one shoulder!

Your body is going to react with Micro-trauma, which then causes your body to develop imbalances, which then leads to muscle pain. Of course, I'm not suggesting that we all throw away our purses for fanny packs (**although a chiropractor can dream**). I am saying we need to be as creative with our purses as we are with our health.

Here are some proactive steps to get started:

- * Make sure your purse is as light as possible. Use a smaller wallet, less change, leave make-up in the car.
- * Use a messenger style bag you can wear across your body with wide and or padded straps.
- * Switch shoulders often during the day.
- * Hold your purse under your "armpit" and do not use the straps.

- * **Okay, I'm just going to say it—try a fanny pack.**



TIP #3: KEEP YOUR HEAD UP!

Seriously, Head Up!

Take a trip to your local Starbucks, or the mall, or even the freeway, and you'll see a common picture. **People with their heads down—and on the phone.**

Outside of being anti-social and dangerous, it's affecting our posture and causing us pain. Real pain. It even has a name.

It's called **Text-Neck**, which specifically refers to a constellation of different injuries and pain types that are sustained from looking down at wireless devices for too long.

Unless you've been living in a cave without Wifi, I don't need to tell you that cell phone use is dramatically on the rise.



79% of the population has their cell phone with them for 22 hours a day.

Put another way, the average smartphone user spends an average of 2 to 4 hours each day with his or her head dropped down.

As a result, cases of "text neck" are seriously on the rise. The issue is that as your head leans forward, it places additional weight on your spine, which then causes head pain, arm pain, neck pain, and numbness.

The more your head tilts forward, the greater this effective weight. A 15-degree angle, for example, places an additional 27 pounds of weight on your spine, while a 60-degree angle places an additional 60 pounds of weight on your spine. This can be likened to bending your finger back all the way and holding it there for an hour.

I probably don't need to tell you that isn't a good thing.

KEEP YOUR HEAD UP (continued)

In fact, the cumulative effect is staggering. Surrounding tissues stretch, becoming sore and inflamed; muscles stretch; and nerves pinch. Furthermore, a head that is tilted down causes the anterior neck muscles to be shortened and tightened, rounding the shoulders. This kind of poor posture, along with the extra weight placed on the spine, will inevitably lead to even more aches and pains.

Now, if that wasn't enough. **Besides the pain and posture affects, "text-neck" can also make you look 10 years older.**

Oh, so now I have your attention!

As Dr. Lancer, a dermatologist in Beverly Hills, succinctly puts it, "If you are always looking down your are going to quickly ruin your neck muscles." Yes, ladies, electronic devices can cause the skin on your neck to sag.

Think of the muscles on the front of your neck like the wires on a suspension bridge (Golden Gate Bridge). Constantly looking down causes those wires to stay loose, preventing them from ever getting toned. It's like a chain reaction. The muscles stay loose, which keeps the skin on top of the muscles loose, which makes them look all crinkly and wrinkly.

And, unfortunately, Dr. Lance is seeing more and more people coming into his office complaining of sagging neck skin. Some of them are younger than 40.

What to do? Well, you could lie down and text. But that might seem odd when you're out at a restaurant. It makes more sense to try something much simpler, like reducing the amount of time you text.

First my heels, then my purse, now you want my phone! I get it. It's tough. But, like any sensible habit, it doesn't have to be an all or nothing proposition, nor do you have to do it all at once. Instead, try reducing your text time by 20 percent each day. Stop texting at night or during meals. You can even designate text-free zones, such as the dining room, as well as text-free hours, say between 4pm and 6pm.

In short, be creative with your text time. It won't only save you from an aching and saggy neck, it just might improve the quality of your social life.



TIP #4: WORK ON YOUR POSTURE



Between texting on cell phones, carrying around heavy purses, and walking on stilts, not to mention, working countless hours in front of a computer, being stuck in traffic, and spending too many hours on the couch, it's no wonder that we're turning into hunched over slouches.


Bad posture is turning into an epidemic.

And make no mistake, slouching affects more than your height or the way you look.

It can cause a myriad of negative effects:

- * Headaches
- * Jaw Pain
- * Shoulder Pain
- * Back Pain

As our middle back hunches, or rounds forward, the head starts to jut forward with the upper back and shoulders. Some of us are even seeing the "hump" at the top of our spines.

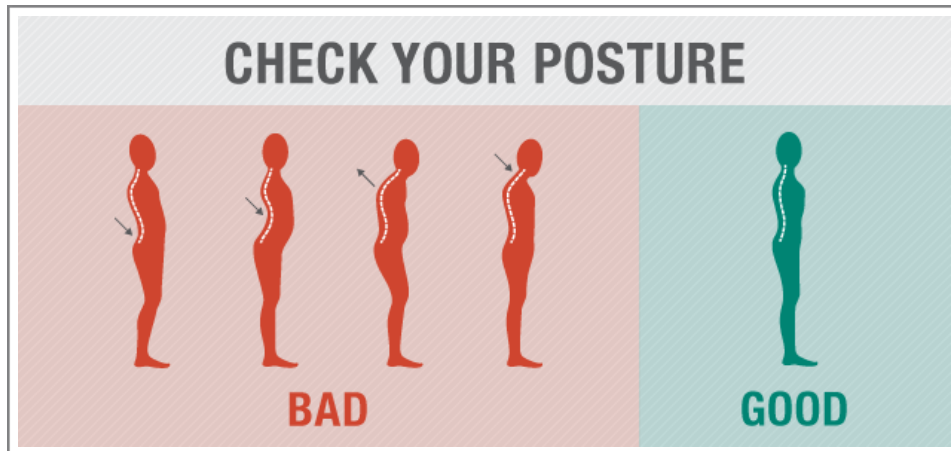
Fortunately it's not too late to counter all the excessive flexion today's modern spine is faced with and correct bad posture. Here are three steps you can take. 

WORK ON YOUR POSTURE (continued)

STEP 1: RETHINK YOUR POSTURE

(Good posture is a bit different from what we might think)

Here's a way to make sure you are standing correctly. Standing straight, extend your buttock back, pull your chin in (making a double chin) then relax 10 to 20%. Or if it helps, think of someone pulling your hair from the crown of your head straight up to the ceiling and gently lift up.



STEP 2: STRENGTHEN MUSCLES IN YOUR UPPER BACK

(Also called spinal erectors or extensor muscles)

The muscles in your back and between your shoulder blades pull you backward and help maintain proper posture when strengthened. Your head and neck will adjust in a more neutral position, creating less postural stress on the sensitive muscles and joints in your neck.

Exercise: Wall Angels

Strengthen your trapezius with this no-equipment-required exercise. Start standing, feet wide, with your back against a wall, arms extended out to the side with your elbows bent 90 degrees, palms facing forward. Then, while keeping your head, spine, butt, elbows, and backs of your hands against the wall, slide your arms straight up overhead.

Start off by completing one set of 10 reps, and then progress to 2 sets of 15 reps.



WORK ON YOUR POSTURE (continued)

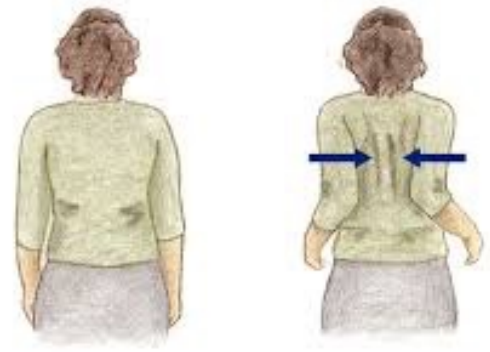
STEP 3: STRENGTHEN YOUR RHOMBOID MUSCLES

(Muscles between your shoulder blades and spine—easy to strengthen)

Shoulder Blade Squeeze

Begin this exercise standing or sitting with your back straight. Your chin should be tucked in slightly and your shoulders should be back slightly. Slowly tighten your rhomboids by squeezing your shoulder blades together as hard and far as possible provided the exercise is pain free.

Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.



Chin Tuck

Sit up tall in a chair and keep your chin parallel to the door. Without tilting your head in any direction, gently draw your head and chin back, like you're making a double chin. Tuck in your chin to the point where the voice changes pitch (your voice will start to sound "funny"). At that point, release the chin slightly so the voice clears and stay in position!

Be careful not to jam your head back. You should feel a stretch along the back of the neck. Release your chin forward. Relax and repeat. You can perform throughout the day. You can choose your start position, whether it is sitting or standing.



Posterior Capsule Stretch

This exercise stretches your rotator cuffs, rhomboids and surrounding connective tissues and relaxes the muscles to alleviate fatigue and soreness after your workout. Stand and bring your left arm horizontally across your body. Press your right forearm against your left forearm as you reach to your right with your left arm. Push your left shoulder to your left to increase the stretch without rotating your torso. Hold this stretch for five to six deep breaths.

Repeat the stretch on the right shoulder.



TIP #5: IMPROVE YOUR COMPUTER POSTURE

As mentioned in Tip #4, sitting at the computer is creating a lot of postural disturbances in our spines. Many of us are sitting six to eight to ten hours a day at a computer, which can dramatically contribute to even more neck and back pain-related issues. Again, there is hope if we quickly take corrective steps to consciously improve how we work.

Here's what you can do to keep your back healthy while at the computer:



1. Keep your feet in contact with the floor, or on a stool. Never let your feet dangle.
2. For full back support, scoot your hips and back flush against the chair back. Check the depth of the chair and make sure it is a correct fit. Shorter people might have to look for a chair with less depth on the seat.
3. Move your chair as close to the desk as possible. This will stop you from leaning forward.
4. **Do not lean forward. (Very important)**
5. Examine your armrests. Armrests play an important role in reducing neck and shoulder strain, and diminishes the likelihood of slouching forward in your chair. Adjust the armrests to the point of where your arms are suddenly lifted at the shoulders. Doing so will allow the armrests to support just the elbow and take the weight off the shoulders. Note: It's good to have a chair that has armrests that move forward so you can be closer to the desk or table.
6. Keep your head up, and place monitor in front of you, not to the side. Unfortunately with laptops this is more difficult.
7. Instead of sitting all day consider alternating standing and sitting at work. Also, get up frequently to stretch, breathe and relax.
8. Using neck exercises will offer additional support.
9. The McKenzie Company has a good slim-line lumbar-support cushion, that attaches to most chairs, and can benefit most. Available on Amazon.
10. Use earphones if you are on the phone a lot.

TIP #6: FIND THE RIGHT PILLOW

Anyone who's ever had a bad night sleep at a motel knows all too well how the wrong pillow can affect the quality of your sleep. Of course, a bad pillow doesn't just rob us of our sleep. It may also worsen or intensify neck pain and other related neck conditions, such as headaches, upper back pain, shoulder pain and arm numbness, or nerve pain stemming from the neck. Our low back can be affected as well.



So, what is the best kind of pillow to you use?

In my office I size pillows for patients who need one, and I have clearly found that no one pillow serves all. Patients with arthritis might need a different pillow than someone with pain down the arm, or someone else who has migraines. In other words, we all have different conditions and neck sizes that make it hard to give a generalized answer.

However, the general guidelines are as follows:



You want a pillow that keeps your head in a neutral position throughout the night.



Those who sleep on their backs need a thinner to medium-sized pillow so their head is not too far forward (or a Neck Roll, aka Cervical Pillow). Note: If using a Neck Roll Pillow, start off for 10-15 minutes, then work up from there.



If you're a stomach sleeper, "bedtime belly flop" places pressure on joints and muscles. This is NOT good for your spine. However, if you insist, look for a very thin, almost flat pillow. You may not even need a pillow for your head as just keeping the head against the mattress may help your head and neck maintain a neutral position. Again, this is NOT good for your spine and may contribute to chronic neck pain.

FIND THE RIGHT PILLOW (continued)



If you sleep on your side, you need a firmer pillow to fill in the distance between your ear and outside shoulder. Your head should be the same distance between your ear and the end of your shoulder as it is when you are standing. In other words do not have your head flexed to the side. Sometimes it takes a few pillows to be comfortable.



Even if you like to sleep on your side or face down, always “start out” on your back (yes you can). Also, use a round pillow or a soft squishy feather pillow. If you want you can even roll a hand towel into a “log shape” and make it about the width of your fist.

Now, put the pillow behind just your neck, so that your head and upper back are on the mattress. It will feel like a slight traction on your neck. (This helps stretch your neck muscles, relaxes your low back muscles and establishes the proper curve of your neck, which a lot of us have lost due to whiplash injuries). It should feel good and relaxing. Stay like this for 15-20 minutes before you fall asleep. Then you can toss it aside and move into your comfortable position.



A lot of my patients are initially skeptical, saying they have never been able to sleep on their backs, but after a few nights of doing the 20 minutes they are able to sleep on it all night. In fact, many start regularly sleeping on their backs.

Of course, if snoring is an issue, this might not be appropriate for you.

TIP #7: A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR GRANDMA

First of all, thank you.

There's no more special job in the universe than yours.

Secondly, be careful. Yes, I know that caring for your grandchild is one of the great joys of your life, and rarely do you complain.

That being said, I have seen too many grandmother's coming into my office after getting hurt while lifting babies, car seats, strollers, etc. It's a rewarding business, but not one without inherent risks.



Here's a few suggestions to keep your back healthy:

- * If you drive with little ones, keep a car seat permanently in your car. I realize car seats can be expensive, but when weighed against the potential harm to your body, they're well worth the price.
- * Do NOT twist your body when you reach, push/pull or lift anything, and that goes for kids, car seats, toys, and messy spills. The combination of lifting and twisting at the same time can cause injury to your disc.
- * Keep anything you need to lift in front of your body.
- * Use your legs more than leaning forward.
- * Before lifting your grandchild, tighten your core and try to "twist" as little as possible.
- * Above everything, have fun and absorb all the love. Afterwards, come see your chiropractor for a healthy adjustment.

Of course, I hope it goes without saying, that this same advice applies to moms as well.

MEET DR. YERMAN. D.C.

With over 35 years of experience, Dr. Debra Yerman, D.C. has built a reputation for insightful and compassionate health care, providing advanced treatments that are effective, long lasting, and uniquely designed to the special needs of her patients.

Dr. Yerman uses treatments that are widely accepted and has a goal to treat patients the least amount of times possible.

Treatments include the Impulse IQ, Laser Therapy, as well as the signature Activator Method Technique. The Activator Method Technique is a gentle, low-force program of chiropractic care that has been safely used to benefit people with a wide range of health problems—without drugs or surgery!

Because Dr. “Deb” is mainstream, she works hand-in-hand with her colleagues in the medical community. Dr. Yerman gives and receives referrals from medical doctors all the time because her only goal is to give the patient (you) exactly what you want and is best for you.



Recognizing that women have specific healthcare needs, Yerman Chiropractic also specializes in providing focused chiropractic care to help women improve comfort, maximize physical performance, and experience a full quality of life. Dr. Yerman helps women through physical stressors such as pregnancy, chest pain, carpal tunnel, sciatica, pelvic floor dysfunction, low back pain, hip pain and more. She'll even assist you with proper biomechanics as you train for your next sporting event.

At Yerman Chiropractic there is only one goal: reduce patient pain and offer relief in the fewest visits possible. In the words of Dr. Yerman, “As much as we love you, we want you in and out of our office as soon as possible, and back to the healthy life you deserve.”

Discover for yourself the power of good health and a pain-free life.

Make an Appointment Today
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Your Back Is In Good Hands

