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**Get back into shape . . .
the chiropractic way**

Back Talk

WITH MARTIN PRESS



There's a lot of misconceptions and confusion surrounding the back and lower back pain. Let's start by testing you on one of the most common. *When lifting an object you should use your back like a crane. True or False?*

I bet some of you more mature people out there who remember the ACC television adverts of old have answered false. And you would be wrong. You should use your back like a crane because your spine is designed like one with its levers and fulcrums (points of pivot).

Not convinced? Then think on this. If you use your back like a crane when lifting you would (1) directly face the object you are planning to lift and (2) get as close to the object as possible before bending your knees to reduce stress on your lower back when lifting.

Most people do damage to their back by lifting objects away from their body or on an angle. When you pick objects up on an angle the rotation of your spine reduces the tensile strength of the disc in your back so is likely to create stress and damage that area.

Ready for another question? Actually the businessman in me is reluctant to debunk this particular misconception but in the interests of your well-being here goes ... **If you damage your back you should immediately apply a heat (wheat pack and the like) to the affected area. True or False?**

The statement is, of course, False. Putting heat on your back is probably the worst possible thing you could do which is why I and other chiropractors are kept busy. You should in fact immediately apply a cold pack because just like an ankle injury the damaged area is inflamed.

Now for my third and final question which I am sure all of you will get right: **If you damage your back you should lay still and rest? True or False?**

Told you it was easy, obviously you need

to keep mobile so you don't totally seize up, but having said that if you can't move, you can't move so ice the area.

Now to clear up more confusion ... When they experience lower back pain people often don't know whether they are suffering from a pinched nerve, joint pain or muscle pain. In most case it is all three. Very seldom do you get a joint problem without a muscular component and equally very seldom to do you actually get a true pinched nerve. The nerve is normally irritated by the inflammatory process.

People also harbour the misconception when they have put their backs out they have put a bone in their spine out of place. For a bone to go out of place we are talking major trauma which may result in dislocation and/or possible fracture. This would result in severe pain and possible paralysis; you definitely would not be walking any where.

A slipped disc is not a disc slipping out of place. It is either a disc herniation, which is like a rupture in that the centre part of the disc protrudes out putting pressure on the spinal cord or nerve roots and pain sensitive tissues hence severe pain, or a prolapse where the disc edges stretch out of proportion much as a car tyre tube develops a bulge putting pressure on these same sensitive tissues.

Treatment for disc herniation/prolapse depends on severity and ranges from gentle manipulation and traction to orthopedic surgery so check with your local registered Chiropractor to find out the appropriate care for you.

There are more things people are mistaken about and we will try to help you understand how your back works and how to look after it yourself in the future articles. ■