

# Beating Back Pain: Low back pain awareness campaign



# Beat the Back Pain

Back pain is one of the most common reasons people seek medical help or miss work. About 8 in 10 people have one or more bouts of lower back pain. In most cases, it is not due to a serious disease or serious back problem, and the exact cause of the pain is not clear. This is called nonspecific lower back pain. The usual advice is to keep active and do normal activities as much as possible.



## Risk factors for developing back pain



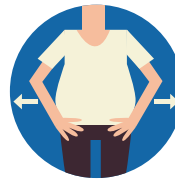
### Age

Commonly starting around age 30 or 40



### Lack of Exercise

Sedentary lifestyle



### Excess Weight

Excess body weight puts extra stress on the back



### Improper Lifting

Using the back instead of the legs can lead to back pain



### Psychological conditions

Depression, anxiety, Stress can cause muscle tension which can contribute to back pain



### Smoking

Smokers have increased rates of back pain. This may occur because smoking causes coughing, which can lead to herniated disks. Smoking also can decrease blood flow to the spine and increase the risk of osteoporosis



### Job-related risk factors

Jobs that require heavy lifting, pushing, pulling, or twisting can injure the back. A desk job may also play a role, especially if you have poor posture or sit all day in an uncomfortable chair



## A frustrating, painful condition for employees and businesses

According to World Health Organization (WHO), low back pain is a very common health problem worldwide and a leading cause of disability - affecting performance at work and general well-being.<sup>1</sup> Research estimates that low back pain is among the top 10 diseases and injuries that account for the highest number of DALYs worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

Back pain isn't considered a disease, but a collection of symptoms, and in most cases, the origins of back pain are unknown.

Note: Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are units of measure for the burden of disability associated with a disease or disorder.<sup>3</sup>  
1 World Health Organization, "Priority Medicines for Europe and the World," March 2013  
2 The Lancet, "Years lived with disability (YLDs) for 1160 sequelae of 289 diseases and injuries 1990–2010: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010," December 2012  
3 World Health Organization, "Metrics: Disability-Adjusted Life Year (DALY)," March 2014

## How to keep the back healthy and strong



- **Exercise.** Regular low-impact aerobic activities — those that don't strain or jolt the back — can increase strength and endurance in the back and allow the muscles to work better. Walking, bicycling and swimming are good choices.
- **Build muscle strength and flexibility.** Abdominal and back muscle exercises, which strengthen the core, help condition these muscles so that they work together to support the back.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight strains back muscles.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking increases the risk of low back pain. The risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked per day, so quitting should help reduce this risk.
- **Stand smart.** Don't slouch. Maintain a neutral pelvic position. When standing for long periods, place one foot on a low footstool to take some of the load off the lower back. Alternate feet. Good posture can reduce the stress on back muscles.
- **Sit smart.** Choose a seat with good lower back support, armrests and a swivel base. Placing a pillow or rolled towel in the small of the back can maintain its normal curve. Keep knees and hips level. Change position frequently, at least every half-hour.
- **Lift smart.** Avoid heavy lifting, if possible. If you must lift something heavy, let your legs do the work. Keep your back straight — no twisting — and bend only at the knees. Hold the load close to your body. Find a lifting partner if the object is heavy or awkward.
- **Improve your posture.** Poor posture can put unnecessary pressure and strain on your spine. Regularly remind yourself to roll back rounded shoulders and sit upright in your chair.
- **Change shoes.** High-heeled shoes are likely to damage to your back if you wear them frequently. Pick comfortable, supportive, and minimally elevated heeled shoes when you can.
- **Stretch.** Stretch regularly to help improve circulation in those muscles and lower the risk of back pain and damage.

Please do send us your feedback at [well-being@metlife.ae](mailto:well-being@metlife.ae). It will help us improve this newsletter if we hear that our content has made a difference in your wellbeing. We are keen to listen to you and to improve for you.

This information is intended to provide general guidance on health and wellness matters and is not medical advice. MetLife is not responsible for the accuracy of this information, which may not apply to your particular circumstances, so you rely on it at your own risk. You should always consult a licensed health care professional for the diagnosis and treatment of any medical condition and before starting or changing your health regimen, including seeking advice regarding what drugs, diet, exercise routines, physical activities or procedures are appropriate for your particular condition and circumstances.