

# Traveling Tips for Reducing Back Pain

**November 2016**

With Thanksgiving around the corner, many of us will be traveling high and low to spend time with family. Back pain is one of the most common ailments on the planet, but it doesn't mean that it should put a damper on your holiday plans. Traveling with back pain can make sitting on a long flight, car ride, or lugging a heavy suitcase feel like torture. This is why we would like to present some traveling tips to reduce back pain.

- Tip #1 – Lift Luggage in Stages

Back strain often occurs when lifting heavy items. For this reason, it is suggested that you move slowly when lifting a heavy piece of luggage and break the action into smaller parts whenever possible. Other important lifting tips include bending at the knees and using your leg muscles (rather than the back muscles) to lift and avoid twisting your lower back while lifting. Additionally, if you are carrying a shoulder bag, switch sides often to avoid stressing on one side of the back.

- Tip #2 – Bring Your Own Back Support

Seats in planes, trains, and automobiles do not provide the ideal back support. A lumbar support pillow can make your seat more comfortable and your trip less grueling. If you don't have a lumbar support, a jacket, sweater, or a rolled up blanket will work just fine to align your spine.

- Tip #3 – Support Your Back with Your Feet

Your feet need to be placed on a firm flat surface at the right height to avoid transferring stress to your lower back. It is suggested that your knees be at a right angle. This means if your seat is too high it is best to elevate them on a footrest. If you are driving, consider cruise control for a longer drive. This allows your feet to be flat on the floor to alleviate any back pain.

- Tip #4 – Pack Light

Think about it. Every extra item you place in your suitcase is one more thing you'll have to carry. Make it easier on yourself by packing less and if you are flying, consider checking any bags you can't easily lift into an overhead bin. It helps to ask yourself questions, such as, "Do I really need a tablet?" or "Do I really need this umbrella?" The less you pack, the more your spine will thank you.

- Tip #5 – Check Your Posture

Your spine was built to move, so it's safe to get up every now and then to stretch. Sitting in one position for long periods of time will stiffen your back muscles and can lead to achiness as well as muscle spasms. Whether you choose to walk around or sit still, always be sure that your shoulders are straight, your feet are flat on the ground and avoid hunching forward.

Last but not least, we'd like to suggest that you treat yourself! If it's not too much, consider upgrading your seat if you are on a long flight. Your back will feel much less discomfort in a roomy business class seat (or even in premium economy) than it would in the back of the plane. Another option may be to take yourself to a spa to soothe any lingering aches from your flight. Consider it an early Christmas present. Safe travels!