

It's a fact...

If you are taking care of infants and toddlers,
you need to take care of your back.

Child care is demanding— you spend your day standing, walking, bending, stooping, and lifting to attend to the needs of infants and toddlers.

- ◆ How many times during the day do you find yourself lifting children as they play or to comfort them or change their diapers?
- ◆ How often do you bend down to secure a child in a high chair?
- ◆ How many times do you stoop to wipe up a spill or pick up toys?
- ◆ And how often do you end the day with an aching back?



The good news is you don't have to reach in the medicine cabinet at the end of your work day to treat your back pain. **There are lifting techniques and exercises to keep your back healthy.**

Infant Lifting Techniques

The Tripod Lift



1. Put one foot next to the child. Keep your back straight, push your buttocks out and slowly lower yourself down onto one knee. (For support as you lower yourself down, put one hand on a stool or on your thigh.)
2. Position the child close to the knee on the floor.
3. Slide the child from the knee on the floor to mid-thigh. Keep your head forward, your back straight, and your buttocks out, and lift the child onto the opposite thigh.
4. Put both of your forearms under the child with your palms facing upward and hug the child close to you.
5. Prepare for the lift: look forward.
6. Lift upwards following your head and shoulders. Hold the child close to your body. Lift by extending your legs with your back straight, your buttocks out, and breathe out as you lift.



The Pivot Technique

Use the pivot technique for lifts that require you to turn, such as lifting an infant to the diapering surface. Twisting while lifting can cause serious damage to the tissues of the back. Use the pivot technique to avoid twisting while lifting.

1. Properly lift the infant.
2. Hold the infant very close to your body.
3. Turn your foot 90 degrees toward the way you want to turn.
4. Bring your other foot next to the leading foot. *Do not twist your body!*

Toddler Lifting Techniques

Working with toddlers requires constant interaction with little ones who are often very active, impulsive and heavy. Manually lifting toddlers should be avoided whenever possible, but when necessary the guidelines describing proper lifting techniques should be followed.

- ◆ Avoid leaning downward from the waist to reach for children. Squat with feet shoulder width apart, keeping back straight and pushing your buttocks out to bring yourself as close to the child as possible, holding the child securely.
- ◆ Tighten stomach muscles and looking forward use thigh muscles to raise yourself breathing out as you lift.

As you lift, always...

1. Get close to the infant.
2. Stand with your feet more than shoulder width apart; put one foot forward and to the side of the infant.
3. Keep your back straight, push your buttocks out, and use your legs to squat down.
4. Move the infant as close to you as possible, holding securely.
5. Look forward.
6. Prepare for the lift: look forward.
7. Lift by extending your legs with your back straight, your buttocks out, and breathe out as you lift.



Reduce the risk of back injury and provide excellent exercise and balance training for toddlers by allowing them to walk up the stairs to a changing table or playground slide, offering only necessary assistance.

Other ways to reduce risk of back injury when caring for toddlers:

- ◆ Store most frequently used and heaviest items in an easily accessible area and at waist height.
- ◆ Adjust diapering surfaces to waist height when steps to the surface are not available.
- ◆ Lower side of cribs to lift and lower child in and out of the crib.
- ◆ Use adult size chair seats with child size legs.
- ◆ Avoid bending down at the waist to interact with toddlers. Instead, assume a squatting or kneeling position.
- ◆ Squat or kneel on a kneepad.



A U-shaped or banana table allows a caregiver to sit with the children in an adult-size seat with child size legs.

- ◆ While sitting on the floor, when possible sit against a wall or furniture or a “husband” pillow to support the back.
- ◆ Use rolling carts or strollers to carry heavier loads and children.
- ◆ Instead of repetitive bending and stooping to clean up toys, etc., incorporate this into children’s clean up and have toddlers pick up the toys.

Other Issues to Consider

Challenge: Slippery surfaces near sinks and drinking fountains

Solutions: Clean spills immediately

Challenge: Adults bending to use child sinks

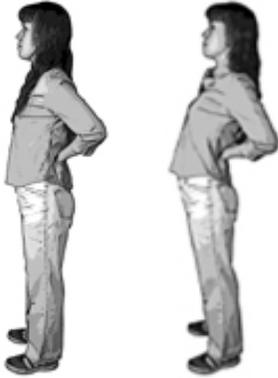
Solutions: Two sinks, foot control with two spouts

Challenge: Laundry services

Solutions: Spring-bottom carts, training

Whether you're lifting infants or toddlers, these exercises can keep your back healthy.

Backward Stretch



1. Stand upright.
2. Place your feet a shoulder width apart.
3. Place your hands on your lower back.
4. Lean backward while keeping your neck straight.
5. Lean further back until you feel a slight stretch in your back.
6. Hold for a count of five.
7. Return to the upright position.
8. Repeat three or four times.

Press Ups



1. Lie on your stomach with your legs straight and feet together.
2. Prop up your upper body with your forearms.
3. Push upward while keeping your pelvis on the floor.
4. Hold for five seconds.
5. Gently lower yourself to the floor. Remember to keep your forearms in contact with the floor at all times.
6. Repeat five times.

Lower Back and Hip Stretch



1. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Press your lower back onto the floor.
3. Grasp one knee with both hands and pull toward your chest keeping your head on the floor.
4. Keep the other knee bent and foot on the floor.
5. Hold for a count of ten.
6. Return to starting position.
7. Repeat with the other leg.
8. Repeat ten times on each leg for three sets.

Pelvic Tilt



1. Lie on your back.
2. Bend your knees at a 90-degree angle.
3. Tighten stomach muscles and buttocks.
4. Slowly push your lower back downward.
5. Hold your back in this position for five seconds.
6. Slowly return to normal and relax.
7. Repeat five times.

When exercises and lifting techniques aren't enough, medical attention may be needed.

You can relieve most back pain with non-prescription medicines and simple home treatment. If the pain lessens over time, or the pain is not because of a serious injury, then successful low back home care is possible. It is important to remember to talk with your doctor about any pain relief techniques you are planning to use.

- ◆ **Call your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms a few days after your injury:**
 - Pain that keeps you from moving.
 - Pain that runs down a leg or goes into an arm.
 - Night pain that keeps you from sleeping.
 - Pain that increases after a few days rest.
 - Pain that does not lessen after rest and basic home treatment.
- ◆ **Immediately call your doctor if you have:**
 - Difficulty controlling your bladder or bowel movements.
 - Loss of sensation in the rectal area.
 - Pain following a fall or impact to the back.
 - Severe leg pain down your legs, weakness, tingling, numbness, or inability to move.
 - Pain that is steadily increasing over several hours.
 - Chills, fever, or night sweats.
 - Difficulty with balance or coordination.

ICE

- ◆ For a day or two, apply ice or a cold pack for about 20 minutes at a time, three or four times a day.
- ◆ Always wrap your ice pack in a thin towel to protect your skin.

HEAT

- ◆ If ice has not relieved the pain after two or three days, apply moist heat.
- ◆ Wrap a hot water bottle in a towel or take a warm shower.
- ◆ Apply moist heat about 15-20 minutes, two or three times a day.
- ◆ Do not use heat if you injured your back in a fall or if the heat increases your symptoms.

As with any workplace intervention, management commitment, training, and employee involvement are also important components of a successful healthy back program for child care providers.



This fact sheet is a product of the DoD Ergonomics Working Group. Written for both supervisors and workers, the fact sheet provides basic information on ergonomics. For more information, visit the working group's Web site at www.ergoworkinggroup.org.