

A LITTLE BACK STORY

Most people think that their daily work is enough exercise. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Our daily activities are usually too random. Think about the cycles of your activities. If you sit at a desk most of the week then mow the lawn, plant a garden and weed the flowerbeds on the weekend, you make your body do a bunch of stuff it is not used to doing. The entire back, neck, upper legs, arms and hands are going to be overstrained, fatigued and will probably lock into painful spasms. You will not sleep well for a night or two because of the aches. You go back to your desk for another week or two and your body may settle down and stop hurting so much, but those muscles will be weak and touchy and you are careful how you move.

A few weeks later, you paint your living room. You move out all the furniture, climb up and down a ladder and use your prominent arm to paint the whole thing. Painting the ceiling with that arm over your head while you are looking up, will over strain the neck, shoulder and arm muscles and you will not sleep well again because you will be in pain. Moving the furniture is going to strain your lower back and you will limp into work hurting all over for another several days. It might be longer this time because those muscles are weaker because of the injuries from the lawn weekend. That neck is going to hurt really badly and you will have a hard time typing and be uncomfortable in your usual position. You may slump your shoulders or lean to temporarily relieve the pain, or at least change it.

Eventually, your body may stop hurting but you now have two sets of strains that did not heal properly, weakening you even more. When you help a friend move her entire household some weekend soon, you will lift things that are too heavy, in improper lifting positions. You will go up and down stairs carry heavy things that are not balanced. You will twist and strain and this time you will probably not be able to stand upright and move without pain at all. Massage and chiropractic will not help because the muscles are too tight. You will resort to drugs to get some sleep but when they wear off you are as bad as ever. Your stress levels will rise, then the pain will become more intolerable and you will finally head off to your doctor for stronger drugs. You may get some stronger drugs to hold you over but a smart doctor will send you for physical therapy.

Ah, Physical Therapy, you think. They will fix you. Guess what? Physical Therapy is EXERCISE! They may give you some heat and ultrasound treatments to assist with the loosening of the muscles but the major point is to get you to exercise gently and regularly while increasing the intensity. The exercises will stretch and strengthen the muscles so that they can do the job of supporting your back properly.

The pain will ease, and decrease and by the end of your sessions, you will probably feel stronger and better than you have for a long time. Now what? Do you determine that you want to feel this good forever and continue to exercise or do you fall back into your previous random activity life and wait for the next bout of pain? The choice is yours.

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