

- family medicine
- chiropractic/active release technique
- nutrition consulting
- physiotherapy
- acupuncture
- registered massage therapy
- laser hair removal
- orthotics

Learn about 'CREEP' Before you Lift

By Pamela Honeyman, Physiotherapist

Think before your lift! That's an expression you'll hear from many health professionals.

Ever wonder why you should consider the position your body's been in before you heave a load of laundry or bend down to tie your shoes? That's because certain positions can lead to back injury and if your back has been in a bent position for an extended period of time (including sitting), it's best to avoid immediately bending forward and any other similar activities.

The stress and stretching of the back muscles and ligaments which occurs during bending (also described as forward flexion), is a physiological phenomenon called 'CREEP' or Continuous and Repetitive Elongation of the Elastic Properties of tissues.

CREEP as stated in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, "causes a decrease in the stiffness of the tissues through the range of motion and an increase in the total range of motion in the lumbar (back) segments." This may lead to an unstable back during lifting.

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Unfortunately the CREEP that occurs with prolonged bending or sitting often doesn't cooperate with our activities and the fast pace at which we tend to do things. Several routine daily life activities involve prolonged bending and then lifting such as:

- Lifting a heavy suitcase after a long flight
- Shoveling snow immediately after a long commute home from work
- Repetitive bending in the garden after a leisurely read of the morning paper
- Lifting something heavy during home renovations after bending to paint the baseboard
- Bending forward to pick up something from the floor (as light as a piece of paper) after sitting in front of your computer or watching TV.

HOW TO AVOID CREEP

After being in a prolonged bent position, stand upright and bend backwards with your hands at the waist to support your backward bend. This movement will compensate for the elongation of the back tissues.

Repeat five to ten times. If you experience back pain, you may be extending too far backwards or this exercise is not appropriate for you due to some other back ailment.

If you can remember and are able to, try to avoid immediate lifting after prolonged forward flexion.

STRENGTH TRAINING

Having those 'abs of steel' – strong core muscle – can also make a difference in the prevention of low back pain. Many research studies show strong abdominal, gluteal and stabilizing back muscles can aid in the appropriate rigidity of the lower back. These specific muscles, if strong and well trained, can increase core stability and decrease movement in the lower back.

TALK TO THE EXPERTS

Physiotherapists are well trained in the assessment and treatment of low back injuries and provide educational tools on how to prevent back ache.



If you have any questions please contact the Adelaide Health Clinic Physiotherapists, Pam Honeyman or Mark Mcfadden.

Acupuncture for Stress and Anxiety

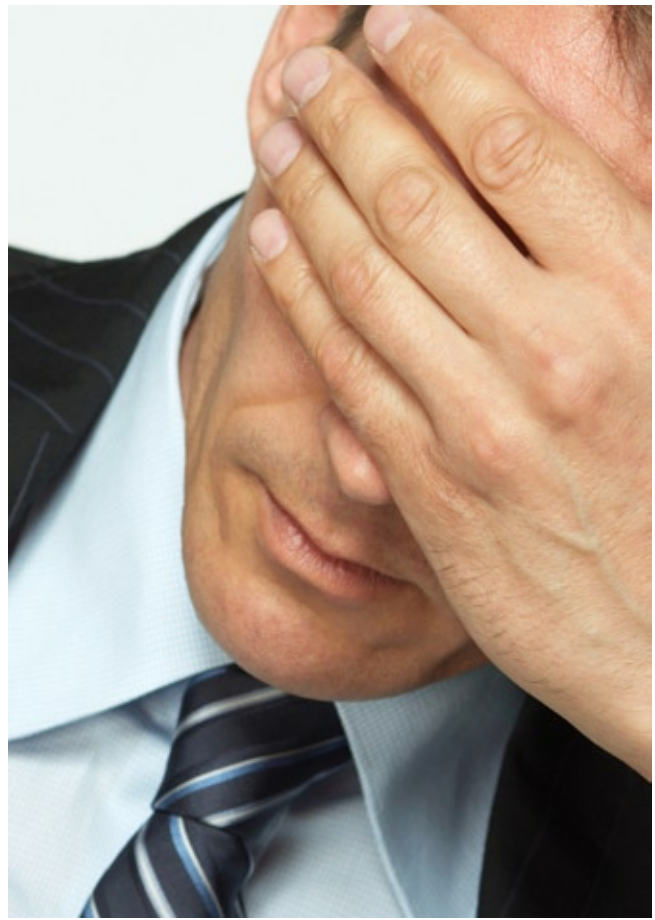
By Dr. Jumy Kim, Acupuncture / TCM Doctor

All of us experience stress at one time or another in our lives. In general, stress is actually a normal and healthy response to events in our lives that may feel beyond our control. When our stress is short-lived and at the appropriate level to the situation, we are usually able to recover without significant damage to our overall health. However, when the stress is extreme and chronic, our emotional health and ultimately, our physical health, begin to suffer.

Our bodies are hard wired to help us react to stressful events. At the first sign of a threat, whether real or perceived, our sympathetic nervous system is triggered to facilitate the “fight or flight” response. This means our heart rate increases, our pupils dilate, and our digestion temporarily shuts down. These processes help direct blood to our extremities, so that if the situation required, we can either fight or turn and run from the “threat”. Unfortunately, the “fight or flight” response does not serve us too well if the “threat” is a demanding boss, difficult family member, financial uncertainties or a worrisome situation that is not being resolved. More often than not, the stress in our lives is long-term, and as a result, we find ourselves in a constant state of “fight or flight”. This constant state of stress results in the elevation of Cortisol (the body’s stress hormone) and our blood pressure. Over time, these symptoms can become worse and may develop into anxiety, depression, fatigue, digestive problems, suppressed immune system and tension headaches.

Emotions from a Traditional Chinese Medical Perspective

In Chinese medicine, stress, anxiety, depression or any strong emotion interrupt the smooth flow of energy throughout the body. According to Chinese medical theory, energy flows through our body through a network of “roads”, almost like a highway system. Stress, anger, or any intense emotion acts like a traffic jam, blocking this free flow of energy. For example, people suffering from chronic stress complain of upper back, shoulder and neck pain. This is because stress is causing tension in those areas, blocking the free flow of energy, causing pain, tightness, and often leading to headaches.



In a highway system, when there is road construction or an accident, traffic may be also backed up on other secondary roads that feed into or out of the affected area. Stress may affect many other parts of the body, most notably digestion, the ability to sleep, pain conditions, and blood pressure.

Acupuncture is able to effectively address these energy blockages caused by stress. Acupuncture works to alleviate stress by stimulating the release of natural pain-killing chemicals in the brain, called endorphins. Acupuncture also improves circulation of blood throughout the body, which oxygenates the tissues and cycles out cortisol and other waste chemicals. A restful night sleep is achieved by decreasing heart rate, lowering blood pressure and relaxing tense muscles.

For a free consultation on how acupuncture can help alleviate your stress, book an appointment with Dr. Jumy Kim at the Adelaide Health Clinic.



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Please contact the Health Clinic at 416.367.5200 for information on any of our services or to book an appointment.