

# Caregiver Assistance News

*“Caring for You - Caring for Others”*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,  
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

**www.aaa7.org** **Helping You Age Better!**



**FEBRUARY 2022**

## **Back Strain - Lift Correctly**

Each part of the body is made to work a certain way and to work with specific other parts of the body. Certain parts are for certain activities and perform best when they are used the way they were intended. You have some control over making your individual parts work better and stronger. You also have control over whether or not you use them wisely. The proper use of your body is called body mechanics.



Body mechanics involves standing and moving one's body so as to prevent injury, avoid fatigue, and make the best use of strength. When you learn how to move, control and balance your own body, you can more easily and safely control and help or move another person. Back injuries among caregivers are common and many such injuries are preventable.

### **General Rules**

The following hints will help you use proper body mechanics and be safe:

- Only lift as much as you can comfortably handle.
- Always let the person you are helping know what you are going to do.
- To create a base of support, stand with your feet 8"–12" apart with one foot a half-step ahead of the other.
- Bend your knees slightly.
- Keep your spine in a neutral (normal arched, not stiff) position while lifting.
- USE YOUR LEGS instead of the back to do most of the work—leg muscles are stronger than back muscles.
- If you can adjust the bed, keep the top at about waist level. If it is low or you are tall, put one foot on a footstool to relieve pressure on your lower back.

### **Preventing Back and Neck Pain**

Back pain is one of the most common reasons people go to the doctor or miss work, and it is a leading cause of disability worldwide. To prevent injuries to yourself, get rest and maintain:

- Good nutrition and physical fitness.
- Good body mechanics.
- A stress management program such as daily meditation.
- A stretching routine before you lift.
- A back strengthening exercise program.

## The Golden Rule...

A little attention to the safest way to move your body—and the person in your care—will keep you from unnecessary injury. Most muscle strain injuries to both the caregiver and care receiver are preventable if you follow some simple rules.

First, consider the task at hand. Think about what you are capable of, what assistance you might need, and to what degree the one in your care can assist you. Then, eliminate hazards such as clutter, throw rugs, or excess furniture. When planning on the space you need to move, pivot, or transfer, allow for more space than you think you need.

### Remember these tips:

1. Let the person you are helping do as much as they can do safely.
2. Never allow the person you are helping to put their arms around your neck.
3. Have the person PUSH off rails, chair arms, etc. (No pulling)
4. Avoid sudden jerking movements; move slowly and communicate what you are doing and need the person to do. Remember, if the person in your care does not move often, they may become lightheaded with a change in position—move slowly!
5. Have all equipment you need ready and in working order, such as a transfer belt, chair, wheelchair, commode, or Hoyer lift. If transferring to or from a bed, wheelchair, or commode with locking brakes, make sure they are locked.
6. If, during a transfer, you start to “lose” the person, do not try to hold them up. Doing so will probably result in injury. Instead, lower them slowly to the floor and call for assistance.



## Arthritis - Oh, Those Aching Joints

Arthritis is a chronic illness causing stiffness, aches and decreased range of motion making certain tasks difficult, such as activities of daily living. If the person in your care, or you, have back and joint pain from arthritis, exercise, diet and medication can help. There is no cure for arthritis, but keeping joints healthy and staying active means more years of independent living. Back pain due to arthritis is common. Patients with severe back pain who quit smoking report less pain and greater improvement than patients who continued to smoke. Nicotine increases pain. Another proof that smoking is bad for you—and your back!



Source: Mayo Clinic; Arthritis Foundation;  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
[www.aaof.org](http://www.aaof.org)

## Your Weight Matters

Obesity is one of the biggest risk factors for developing back pain and arthritis because it speeds the destruction of joint-cushioning cartilage. Losing weight—even just 10 or 11 pounds—can cut your risk in half.

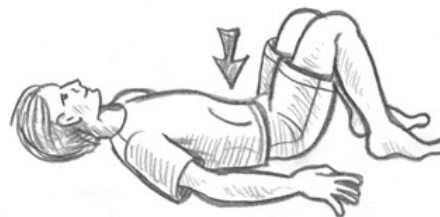
# Taking Care of Yourself

## Daily Back Strengthening Exercises

• **Hug Your Knees**—Lie on your back with knees bent and soles on the floor. Use your arms to hug one knee at a time to your chest. Ten times each knee.



• **Flatten Your Back**—Lie on your back with knees bent and soles on the floor. Take deep breaths as you tighten your abdominal muscles and press the small of your back into the floor. Hold to a count of 15 as you continue to breathe deeply.



• **Chest Lift**—Lie on your stomach in a relaxed position. Put your hands palms down at chest level and raise your head and chest from the floor. Breathe and hold this position for a count of 25. Gradually increase the time you are able to remain in this position.



These back strengthening exercises will take time to have an effect, but continue them, even after your back feels stronger. And, no matter how strong your back feels, always use proper body mechanics! Remember to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

## Memory Care - Resistance

People with Alzheimer’s disease may get upset when somebody touches them. You may be trying to do something to help, but they do not understand what’s going on. They may be feeling uncomfortable, powerless, frightened, tired, in pain, or confused. They cannot say how they want to be treated.

**HEAP**  
**Home Energy**  
**Assistance Program**




Now open for applications for 2021-2022.  
 This program can help eligible Ohioans manage their heating bills. Applications are available from your local Community Action Agency

---

*If interested or if you have questions, contact your county Community Action Agency or the AAA7 Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277.*

**TELEPHONE CAREGIVER SUPPORT**

**Thursday, February 17th**  
**1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**



If you are interested in this free support group, please contact Vicki Woyan for more details.

**Call: 1-800-582-7277, ext. 215**  
**E-Mail: [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org)**

# **Safety Tips - Back Pain and Anxiety**

If you have no sign of a serious cause for your back pain (such as loss of bowel or bladder control, weakness, weight loss, fever, or it follows a fall or other injury), stay as active as tolerable. Tips to handle back pain:

- Stop normal physical activity for only the first few days. This helps calm your symptoms and reduce inflammation.
- Apply ice to the painful area for the first 48 to 72 hours as cold reduces pain and then use heat which helps muscles relax.
- Take over-the-counter pain relievers.
- Sleep in a curled-up, fetal position with a pillow between your legs. If you usually sleep on your back, place a pillow or rolled towel under your knees to relieve pressure.
- No heavy lifting or twisting of your back for the first six (6) weeks after the pain begins.
- A physical therapist can teach you which exercises are right for you.



*Source: National Institutes of Health MedlinePlus*

---

*Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.*



## **Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

PO Box 154 • 160 Dorsey Drive • Rio Grande, OH 45674-0154

Toll-Free Number: (800) 582-7277 • TTY: 711 (Relay Ohio)

Website: [www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org) • E-Mail: [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7](https://www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7)

---

*Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs.*

*The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*