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GIVE YOUR BACK A BREAK THIS LABOR DAY

Reduce back pain at the office

PLANO, Texas (August 26, 2008) – As Dallas/Fort Worth's workforce takes a break this Labor Day, perhaps our backs deserve one as well. It isn't just people in labor-intensive professions who experience back pain. People in occupations that require hours sitting at a desk, like management, business and financial professionals, fall right behind installation, repair and maintenance occupations, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' list of top 10 occupations with the most back injuries.

The good news is that simple precautions throughout the workday can reduce back pain in the office and keep workers moving forward at a productive pace. While back pain may be an annoyance for some, it's troublesome for many employers. Consider the amount of money lost while America's laborers take time away from work to ease their back pain. According to the American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons, almost \$9 million dollars in workers' compensation costs are related to back pain and result in over 100 million lost workdays per year.

The big question is why would people who sit all day have back problems? It's harder to maintain proper posture while sitting than standing. And if a person sits for hours at a time, the constant pressure can really take a toll on their spine, especially if they sit improperly.

In fact, Texas Back Institute has a work injury program that provides rehabilitation to specifically address and define safe work parameters. The goal is to return the worker to gainful employment by teaching proper techniques for each patient's specific work environment.

Dr. Andrew R. Block, who heads up the work injury program at the Texas Back Institute, recommends the following simple tips for long days at the office:

1. PROPER POSTURE

Sit properly; posture is imperative for people who sit at a desk all day. Sitting improperly can add stress to your spine and back muscles. Don't slump over; don't lean forward from the waist. Keep your shoulders back and your back straight.

2. STRETCH

Get up and stretch throughout the day. Moving can keep muscles from getting stiff and fatigued, causing the spine to carry more of the burden.

3. EXERCISE

Stay fit. Maintaining strong core muscles can help ease the stress of back muscles. Also, by gaining weight your back muscles must support the additional load, which can be tiring and painful.

4. DRIVE TIME

While commuting, move the seat forward so your knees are level with your hips. But don't get so close to the steering wheel that you can't turn it easily.

"Overall, using good body mechanics and staying physically fit regardless of age will protect you in every circumstance," said Dr. Block. Sure, it sounds easy enough, but many forget the importance of practicing these back-saving tips. "Sometimes we just need a reminder that it's important to take care of our spine. Whether we're at home, at work or at play, it's a 24-hour-a-day job that only we can control."

About Texas Back Institute

Texas Back Institute, one of the largest freestanding multispecialty spine clinics in the United States, was established in 1977 and provides comprehensive medical care for back and neck pain. Texas Back Institute is a back care leader specializing in spinal arthroplasty, minimally invasive spine surgery, degenerative disk disease and spinal deformation. As an academic health care organization, Texas Back Institute has trained hundreds of physicians, scientists and allied health professionals. Its research institution employs state-of-the-art technology and is involved in many clinical trials, including artificial discs. Texas Back Institute's professional staff includes board-certified spine surgeons, general surgeons, internists, physiatrists, pain specialists, exercise physiologists, and a team of physical and occupational therapists. Texas Back Institute has locations in Dallas, Denton, Fort Worth, Mansfield, McKinney, Plano,

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Rockwall, Trophy Club and Wichita Falls, Tyler, Odessa, Texas, and Phoenix and Gilbert, Arizona. For more information, visit www.texasback.com.

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