



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## EASY TIPS FROM TEXAS BACK INSTITUTE TO AVOID BACK PAIN WHILE TRAVELING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Tips for a happy, healthy back this holiday travel season

PLANO, Texas (December 12, 2008) – As many people hit the road this holiday season, few think about the strain on their backs that traveling can cause. Carrying luggage, long flights or drives in the car, the stress of the holidays can all add up and yield painful results for the back. Luckily, there are simple things travelers can do to prevent pain and enjoy their destinations.

Improper lifting and sitting still for extended periods of time are common causes of back pain. “The spine was designed to move, and sitting still for hours on end in either a plane or a car can wreak havoc on the spine and the structures that support it,” said Jason Brewton, director of physical therapy for the Texas Back Institute. “Likewise, moving heavy luggage can be equally painful if done improperly.”

An arsenal of strong back and core muscles gained through exercise is the best way to prevent pain, but the Texas Back Institute has designed the following tips for traveling.

**Fix the seat** – Supporting the curve in your low back is especially important with many airplane seats, as they are often worn out and force your lower back to an unnatural, stressful position. Place a small rolled-up airline pillow, blanket or a towel or lumbar pillow between your back and the seat to support the natural inward curve of your lower back. You may use commercial low back supports. Also, consider sitting in a slightly reclined position, which is generally less stressful on your spine.

**Do it “right”** – While seated, your knees should be bent at a right angle, if not, the angle can further stress your low back. If your seat is too high, place your feet on something that can act as a firm footrest to keep your knees at a right angle.

**Drink water** – Water circulates healing nutrients and oxygen throughout the body. Drink water frequently to help keep pain away and keep your body nourished.

**Get up and move** – Sitting in a static position for extended periods of time stiffens the back muscles, which can put stress on the spine. Get up, stretch and move around every 20 to 30 minutes if possible. This may be impractical if you are flying in coach and stuck in an inside seat. In this case, we recommend moving every 1-2 hours. Go to the back of the plane and do back bends, marching in place, heel raises, low back rotation and side bend stretching, etc. Movement stimulates blood flow, reduces negative effects from prolonged sitting posture, and brings important nutrients and oxygen to your back, reducing stiff muscles and helping curb inflammation. Consider an aisle seat to make getting up easier.

**Use your entire body to turn when lifting heavy luggage** – This is a common cause of injury to the low back. Pivot with your feet, not your back, so that your whole body moves, rather than twisting your spine. Adding an injury to the affects of long flight would simply make things worse.

**Avoid making carry-ons too heavy** – Lifting excessive weight overhead is a common cause of hyperextension injuries. This occurs because the weight is too heavy for the trunk to maintain stability, and the low back has to overextend while hoisting the heavy bag into the overhead bin.

#### **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, Rockwall, Trophy Club and Wichita Falls, Tyler, Odessa, Texas, and Phoenix and Gilbert, Arizona. For more information, visit [www.texasback.com](http://www.texasback.com).*

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