

## Mind your posture – carers, care for your backs

There are currently around 6.5 million carers in the UK with the figure set to rise to 9 million by 2037<sup>1</sup>. For many carers physical activity such as lifting is a significant part of their daily routine. However, not all carers will be aware of their back health when looking after someone.

Although paid carers may receive training on how to protect their backs during the physical aspects of their work, many unpaid carers, of which there are 5.8 million in England and Wales<sup>2</sup>, may not receive any training or information about back care.

To coincide with Back Care Awareness Week (7 - 11 October) The British Chiropractic Association (BCA) has developed the following simple tips for all carers to help them whilst they're helping others.

### Golden rules for carers

- **Think ahead** - assess each situation and look for the best and easiest way to achieve the desired result, this may mean using any available equipment whether it be for specialist lifting or a simple sack barrow for moving boxes of supplies
- **Follow the weight** - always try and face the direction in which you want to carry any weight - your body is strongest when you are square on to the weight
- **Take care when lifting** - never lift while twisting from the waist. Bend your knees, try to have a relaxed, straight back and if possible, brace your abdominal muscles. For added stability make sure that your feet are about a shoulder width or more apart before lifting
- **Ask for training** - whether you are caring in a formal setting or helping someone at home, make sure you have been properly trained in how to use any equipment
- **Supportive shoes are essential** - wear good, soft-soled shoes that are supportive and have a good grip on the ground
- **Take regular breaks** - if doing a repetitive task, take a break every 20 minutes and do some simple stretches to relax your muscles.

### Carers – Straighten Up

Tim Hutchful from the BCA comments: “Carers spend long periods of time on their feet and put a lot of strain on their bodies, from lifting and assisting the person they are caring for, to moving equipment. Even though our bodies are very well adapted to a variety of tasks, carers need to be particularly careful not to overload themselves and put their backs at risk.

“Formal care settings should have lifting and moving equipment available and staff should always make sure that they have been trained in the proper use of all equipment. Home carers should make sure they receive home assessments for the person they are caring for as equipment can be loaned out – this will require appropriate training for proper use.”

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics taken from Carers UK <http://www.carersuk.org/newsroom/stats-and-facts>

<sup>2</sup> According to data from the Office of National Statistics from the 2011 census



The British Chiropractic Association has developed a very simple three minute exercise routine entitled 'Straighten Up UK', which is really easy to incorporate into daily life to help strengthen the spine and improve posture. The exercise routine can be accessed on the BCA website here: <http://bit.ly/straightenup>.

**-ENDS-**

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### **Notes to editors**

1. Chiropractic is a primary contact health profession that specialises in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and management of many conditions that are due to problems with bones, joints, muscles and nerves, particularly those of the spine.
2. The BCA is the largest and longest established association for chiropractors in the UK. Chiropractic is a statutorily regulated healthcare profession, regulated by the General Chiropractic Council (GCC). Members of the BCA must abide by the GCC's Code of Conduct and Standard of Proficiency. The association only accepts from an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education. Chiropractic care offers hands on pain management and focuses on muscles, joints and nerves. Chiropractic is suitable for all ages and can help with a wide range of problems.
3. Chiropractic treatment mainly involves safe, often gentle spinal manipulation to free joints in the spine or other areas of the body that are not moving properly. Apart from manipulation, chiropractors may use a wide variety of techniques including ice, heat, ultrasound, exercise and acupuncture as well as advice about posture and lifestyle.