

[IMAGE]

Taking Back Pain to School

Low back pain often begins in childhood - 10% of 9- to 10-year-olds suffer from it. One cause of childhood low back pain is poor posture. Although good posture can reduce the number of low back problems, the effectiveness of health education at improving posture in children has received little research attention.

A recent study in the journal *Spine* focused on the success of different education methods when teaching correct posture to schoolchildren. Over one hundred third-grade students in Spain were studied. Some attended sessions to learn and demonstrate correct postures while performing tasks, focusing on lifting and bending activities at the students' homes, classrooms, and physical education classes. Other children did not receive specific posture classes, but did learn some basic health information. Written and demonstrated tests on correct posture were administered several times over one year. Four years later, cases of back pain or problems were recorded.

The children taught correct postures demonstrated significantly improved postures in all tests; the other children showed little improvement. In addition, four years later, the posture-class members were less likely to have developed back problems than other children.

If you have children, discuss posture education with your doctor or chiropractor. In addition, be on the lookout for other causes of childhood low back pain, including an excessively heavy backpack (packs should not weigh more than 15% of a child's body weight) and poor flexibility in the legs, abdomen and back.

Reference:

Méndez FJ, Gómez-Conesa A. Postural hygiene program to prevent low back pain. *Spine*, June 1, 2001;26(11), pp. 1280-1286.

For more information on childhood conditions, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/childhood.html>.

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