

# Taking Care of Your Back

Back pain is a common problem. However special needs parents may be more at risk of back pain because of the amount of lifting and moving of equipment that they do on a daily basis.

## Plan and Prepare

Take time to think about the task that you are going to do and be aware of the movements needed to complete the task. Try and cut down the amount of lifting required where possible. This may make tasks a little bit longer to begin with, but you will soon get used to it.

## Keep Calm

When we panic and rush things, we are more likely to hurt ourselves. Stress management and taking care of our mental health is vital for our physical well-being.

## Exercise

This is one of the best ways to help prevent and manage back pain. The type of exercise, whether it is walking, swimming or yoga, does not matter as long as you do something regularly and remain active. The choice of exercise is yours; if you enjoy what you are doing, you will be more likely to continue and see the benefits. Exercise can be divided into three sections – mobility, strength and endurance. Below are some exercises that you can complete at home which may help strengthen your back to prevent or ease back pain:

**Mobility:** stretches (bending down to touch toes, lying on back and bringing knees to chest, or cat/camel movement all stretch lower back))



**Strength:** squatting, modified deadlifts, plank, press ups



**Endurance (cardio vascular):** walking, running, cycling, swimming



## How to promote good back health:

- 1** Avoid sitting for too long in one place; take frequent movement breaks and shorten the length of your car journeys.
- 2** Take care when lifting – use the strength in your hips and legs to lift rather than putting all of the pressure onto your spine.
- 3** Eat a healthy diet – being overweight can contribute to back pain.
- 4** Strengthen your core muscles by doing some of the exercises already mentioned to help protect your back.
- 5** Adjust and monitor your sitting posture when using a computer and watching the TV.
- 6** Avoid smoking – this impairs your circulation, which in turn slows down how quickly your body can recover.
- 7** Check that your mattress supports your body properly.

