



Training notes from the woods & the classroom

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“Back Basics”

By Paul Schultz

Last fall I had fairly significant lower back pain and so I went to my chiropractor. He gave my wallet the usual adjustment, prescribed a cold pack and the pain went away for a few weeks only to return! A few months of that motivated me to keep looking and so I went to my regular doctor; who I should have went to in the first place. He prescribed a physical therapist but before I could go my mother recommended a different chiropractor. So, being the obedient son off I went.

What a difference! It was amazing how much more I got for my \$. Traction, heat treatment, etc. and the usual “adjustment”. That’s where they twist you up like a pretzel and pop your bones back where they belong. It’s a little freaky but it’s worth it because you feel a lot better afterward. They also have a special table for another type of adjustment where you lay face down (which isn’t so freaky) and they seem to know exactly which bones are out of place.

But the big improvement was being fitted for a custom orthotic. An orthotic is a shoe insert like a Dr. Scholl’s but they are built specifically for your feet. The chiropractor had a rubber mat connected to a computer. You walk normally on the mat and they analyze your step to determine if you have any issues. The results are color coded to indicate pressure points and can be played back in slow motion, it’s pretty impressive. From there they email the details of your feet and have the orthotic custom made.

My problem was that I was putting too much pressure on the right side of my right foot, and I have high arches. I’ve had the orthotic inserts for three months and haven’t had any more back pain! They cost \$180.00 but they’re worth it and they’re supposed to last for many years. Many people don’t recommend chiropractors but I was very pleased with my experience. Of course you should always consult your doctor if you experience prolonged or severe back pain, so he can identify any serious conditions.

To stay healthy, your back (and all your bones) needs to keep moving. The right kinds of motion are good for your back and help keep it pain-free. But moving the wrong way can lead to back problems. The good news is that many people with back problems can find relief through self-care.

Sometimes back pain comes as the sharp pain of a sudden injury. At other times, back pain is a passing twinge or a constant ache. But in any case, back pain can limit your life. Back pain may

occur if you keep moving in the wrong way. Or, it may develop if you move too little. No matter what causes it, you can help reduce and prevent back pain with self-care.

After diagnosing your back problem, your doctor will prescribe a treatment plan that's right for you. Depending on your problem, your doctor may want you to work with a physical therapist. An expert in safe movement and exercise, a physical therapist can teach you easy techniques for self-care. By using these techniques as directed, you can improve your symptoms. Even in cases when surgery is needed, self-care is crucial to recovery.

You should also consider your truck's seat. Air suspension is the best way to go. Some driver's report that the Eldorado brand of air suspension seat offers unsurpassed riding comfort because it moves naturally with your body at the knee and hip. The vertically integrated pivot "knee action" significantly reduces road shock and vibration. But that's like the chiropractor – some people love them and others hate them!

In many cases, self-care is all that's needed to treat your back problem. You may want to start by learning about the spine. Doing so can help you see how proper movement can protect your back. Then, by using good body mechanics and doing certain exercises daily, you'll be able to move more safely.

A healthy spine supports the body while letting it move freely. It does this with the help of three natural curves. Strong, flexible muscles help too. They support the spine by keeping its curves properly aligned. The disks that cushion the bones of your spine also play a role in back health. When all these parts of the spine are healthy, the lumbar curve (lower back) can support most of the body's weight without pain.

The spine is made of bones (vertebrae) and pads of soft tissue (disks). These parts are arranged in three curves. When properly aligned, the curves keep your body balanced. They also support your body when you move. By distributing your weight throughout your spine, the curves make back injuries less likely.

Strong, flexible back muscles help support the three curves of the spine. They do so by holding the vertebrae and disks in proper alignment. If the abdominal, hip, and leg muscles are also strong and flexible, they can reduce strain on the back.

The lumbar curve (lower back) is the hardest-working part of the spine. It carries more weight and moves the most. Aligning this curve helps prevent damage to vertebrae, disks, and other parts of the spine.

Disks are the soft pads of tissue between the vertebrae. The disks absorb shock caused by movement. Each disk has a spongy center (nucleus) and a tougher outer ring (annulus). Movement within the nucleus allows the vertebrae to rock back and forth on the disks. This provides the flexibility needed to bend and move. Disk size, shape, and flexibility change throughout the day. While you sleep, the nucleus fills with fluid. This increases pressure in the disk. During the day, movement pushes fluid in and out of the nucleus. This keeps the disk healthy.

Well, I'm well over my word quota so next month we'll take a look at how the spine becomes unhealthy, diagnosing your back problem, proper posture, learning safe body mechanics and exercises for a healthier back.

Drive Safe!

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...” – Psalm 139:14

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