

My Back Pain

As a doctoral student, everyday I went to the Computer Center and worked on the computer for at least 13 hours non-stop. After that, I would go home, sit at my desk and write for few more hours. In total, I worked on my thesis for 17 hours a day. Seven months later, I started to have severe muscle cramps in my low back. Every time I bent to pick up something from the floor, I screamed of pain. Pain felt like a dagger poking my sides and back muscles. It felt like an electric shock. About 5 p.m., I could not stand up, sit upright or work at all. My back was killing me. I had to lie down on the floor for 2 hours, in order to rest my back and to be able to continue my work.

One Sunday, I could not leave my bed as my back muscles were trembling and I was scared to death. I thought there was something wrong with my kidneys. The following day, I went to see a doctor. She told me that people my age (I was young then) do not usually have low back pain. She examined me and asked whether I had a car accident, fell down or hit my back against something. I answered in the negative. She wanted to know what I was exactly doing. I said that I was working on my thesis for 17 hours. "As long as you are doing what you're doing, your back would continue to hurt you," She added. She handed me a sheet of paper containing back exercises and asked me to take six aspirins a day. She advised me to adjust my chair, to take short breaks and go for a walk. I followed the doctor's advice. In addition, I used to go to the bookstore and read books about back pain. Books provided me with lots of tips about correct posture while standing, sitting and sleeping, kind of bed and chair one should sleep or sit on, how one should sit in a car or bus, and what exercises relieve back pain and strengthen upper and lower back muscles and abdominal muscles as well. I became more educated about back pain and started to change my posture and life style. Exercise became an important part of my daily routine not for

luxury, but as a therapy and as a prevention of possible complications in the future.

Although my back pain is almost gone, I still have to watch my posture, the pillow, bed, and chair wherever I go. When I work long hours (which I always do), I move around for five minutes once every hour or so. I always remember the golden rule that says that prevention is better than cure.