

HEALTH EDUCATION: BACK PAIN

- Knowledge** After working through this lesson, participants will be able to
- Attitude**
- Practice**
1. Describe back pain and list some causes of back pain.
 2. List ways to prevent back pain.
 3. Demonstrate exercises to strengthen and stretch the back muscles.
 4. Describe how to treat back pain.
 5. Teach the *Back Pain* picture book.
- Overview** This series of lessons is based on the *Health Education Program for Developing Communities*, which is available from <http://hepfdc.info/>. These lessons are accompanied by a series of health teaching booklets on the individual topics. These lessons are based on information and standards from the World Health Organization. The lessons can be used with adults or with older children and teens.
- Materials** *Collect these items before beginning the lesson:*
- Poster-size paper, markers, and masking tape
 - Handouts:
 - *Back Pain*

LESSON

60 minutes

Simulation: (5 minutes)

Instructions: Ask two or more participants to move a heavy object, such as a heavy box. One person squats and picks up the box with his back straight, bending his knees. The other leans over to pick up the box with a curved back. Later, he complains of back pain.

Illustration:

Instructions: Show or draw the illustration, *Back pain*

Ask SHOWD Questions:

*What did you **S**ee?*

*What was **H**appening?*

What is the best way to pick up something that is heavy?

Back Pain (10 minutes)

Instructions: Discuss in large group.

A. What is back pain?

1. Back pain is pain in the back, usually in the lower back
2. Back pain is very common.
3. Back pain is not a disease but a symptom
4. Back pain has different causes.
5. Back pain usually gets better over time.

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6. Back pain may become a long-lasting problem.
- B. What causes back pain?**
1. Back pain is often caused by muscle spasms in the back muscles
 2. The muscle spasm causes a cramp in the back. This may be very painful.
 3. Muscle spasms may be caused by an awkward movement of the back, or by twisting the back.
 4. But even simple movements such as bending to tie your shoe can cause muscle spasms.
 5. Coughing or sneezing can also cause muscle spasm and back pain.
 6. Accidents may cause damage to the back, leading to back pain.
 7. Over time, some people develop back problems due to aging or degeneration of the back.

Preventing Back Pain (10 minutes)

- A. What are some ways to prevent back pain?**
1. Strengthen your back muscles by doing back stretching and strengthening exercises at least 2 -3 times per week.
 2. Have good posture. Stand straight. Sit up straight.
 3. Be careful how you lift heavy objects. Bend your knees and your hips while keeping your back straight. Do not bend your back.
 4. Avoid accidents.
 5. Lose weight if you are overweight.
 6. Use a firm mattress.
 7. If your work involves heavy lifting, wear a back support.
 8. Do not smoke.

Treating Back Pain (10 minutes)

Instructions: Refer to the *Back Pain* teaching booklet. What are some ways to treat acute back pain? (Acute back pain is pain that just started, in contrast to chronic back pain.)

- A. Treating acute back pain**
1. Apply ice for the first 6 hours to two days after the injury.
 2. After three days, heat may be applied.
 3. You may use a pain reliever such as Paracetamol for temporary relief.
 4. Be careful! All pain relievers have side effects. Do not continue to take pain relievers for more than 12 days unless instructed by your doctor.
 5. Heat, massage, exercise, and gentle stretching may help back pain.
 6. But avoid strenuous exercise and activities such as heavy lifting if they make the back pain worse.
 7. Bed rest, corsets, and back braces do NOT help—what is needed are strong back muscles.
 8. Gradually increase activity.
 9. Use a firm mattress.
 10. See your health care provider if the back pain lasts more than 6 weeks
 11. After the back pain starts to get better, begin stretching exercises.
 12. Some examples of stretching exercises are:
 - Lie flat on the floor with your legs raised and resting on a pillow or footrest.
 - Sit and lean forward and lower your head to your knees.
 - Stand and lean backwards, with your hands on your lower back.

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13. Begin back strengthening exercises, such as:
 - Pelvic tilt
 - Bicycling
 - Partial sit-ups or crunches
 14. The back stretching and strengthening exercises will strengthen the back muscles and help prevent future back pain.
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Teaching Booklets (20 minutes)

- A. Divide into pairs. Practice teaching each other the *Back Pain* teaching booklet.
 1. Practice teaching
 - B. During the week, visit your friends and neighbors to teach about back pain using the teaching booklet.
 1. Home visiting
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Conclusion and Take-Away (5 minutes)

Discuss together:

- A. What did I discover in this lesson?
 - B. Who could I share with?
 - C. What will I do with what I discovered in this lesson?
 1. When?
 2. What do I expect to happen?
 3. How will I know if it happened?
 - D. Pray
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References:

Ehrlich, G. 2003. *Back pain*. Bulletin of the World Health Organization 81(9); Available from: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/81/9/Ehrlich.pdf>

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