

Healthy Holiday Shopping

by Shelly Jones, DC

‘T is the season for holiday cheer, family gatherings, parties, traditions, traveling, and... shopping! Making it through the holidays without feeling the effects of it in your back and neck is the goal, so here are some healthy hints on how to shop without dropping:

Have a plan. Plan your obligations in advance so that you can minimize the rush and hassle of last-minute preparations. Plan time for yourself to wind down— quiet time, coffee with a friend, a massage, chiropractic care and perhaps some nutritional supplementation like extra vitamins B12 and C.

Unload your bag, purse or wallet. Before you hit the mall, unload your purse so it is light and rests comfortably on your shoulder. For men, unload all unnecessary items from your wallet so that you aren't sitting on it while you drive. Then, throughout the day, take

parcels to the car so you don't have to carry them around with you.

Stay hydrated. Pack water bottles in the car or take time to sit down and drink some cool water to feel refreshed and re-energized.

Drive in comfort. Use a pillow or folded towel to support your lower back while sitting in a car, then take hourly stops to walk, stretch backwards and move your legs.

Get plenty of rest. Many accidents and injuries occur due to the fatigue that comes from all the traveling, walking, lifting and stress.

Lift correctly. Hold objects (even the turkey) close to your body, keeping a slight arch in the lower back, and bend at the knees before standing up or squatting down. Lift with the large thigh and buttock muscles, not the small back muscles.

Give your back a rest. Elevate or rest one foot on a small stool, cabinet or book when cooking or standing for a long time. This takes the pressure off of the back and hips.

Maintain good posture, even while visiting different environments. Change positions often, and sit so that you don't have to twist to look at TV or engage in conversation.

Wrap presents at table height rather than on the floor.

Stress creates muscle tension, aggravating and magnifying underlying conditions and weaknesses. Learn how to de-stress periodically, with deep breathing and quiet meditative breaks. Shopping or entertaining can be a test of endurance, too, so plan to treat yourself after a long day or event. Soak in a hot tub of Epsom salts to relieve tired, tense muscles and joints. Most of all, enjoy yourself and maintain joy and the holiday spirit.

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