

Personal Ergonomics Issues Regarding Wallets, Purses, and Briefcases

Many of us carry our wallet and personal belongings in our pockets, purse, and/or briefcase. Carrying a heavy load on your shoulder can place stress on your spine while sitting on a thick billfold may compress nerves and possibly lead to discomfort. Here are a few things to keep in mind:



Placing objects such as a wallet or cell phone in your back pocket can affect your posture and spinal alignment by causing one hip to sit higher than the other. Sitting on a wallet has been known to contribute to Sciatica when the sciatic nerve is compressed or irritated. Symptoms may include pain, tingling and numbness that can radiate down to the feet. If you are experiencing pain or discomfort, please consult your physician.

Tips:

1. Carry your wallet in your front pocket or remove it when seated for long durations such as a car trip or at your desk.
2. Reduce the thickness of your wallet by keeping your bills in a separate money clip.
3. Consolidate the contents of your wallet as much as possible. Try reducing the number of cards in your wallet by printing important information on one piece of paper and having it laminated. For example, write all of your important phone numbers and club/airline membership information on one small sheet. Remove loyalty cards if the store can look up your account by phone number or driver's license. Many department stores and video rental places can look up your account without a card. Regularly inventory the contents of your wallet and remove unnecessary or rarely used items.
4. Stretching can improve blood circulation and reduce fatigue and discomfort. If you are experiencing pain or discomfort, a physician may recommend specific exercises.



A heavy purse, laptop bag, or messenger bag may contribute to shoulder, neck, and back pain as well as affect posture. Tips three and four for wallets also apply to bags carried over the shoulder. In addition:

Tips:

1. Alternate shoulders by switching the bag from side to side.
2. Don't let your bag cause you to lean to one side. A shoulder bag should not interfere with your motion.
3. Use a bag with large padded straps to help distribute the weight across your shoulder.
4. Downsize the items in your bag to just enough for a day or two. Look for travel-size options for items you regularly carry.
5. Try to carry smaller bags or alternate a purse with a shoulder strap with one with a handle for hand carrying.

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