

The hip hinge

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Craig Liebenson

Everyone has heard that if you have a bad back you should lift with your legs NOT your back. But, what does this really mean? It means that you should bend or 'hinge' your hips and knees instead of your waist or spine when you lift. This same advice can be extended to activities such as rising from a chair, getting in or out of your car, up and down from bed, washing your face, etc. The best way to protect your back is to hinge with your hips instead of your back, especially early in the morning or when performing an arduous task such as lifting an object.

What is the hip hinge?

Fig. 1 shows a person squatting down while bending or hinging

mostly from the waist. This is potentially harmful for the back in the morning or if the person was lifting something. Fig. 2 shows the same person squatting down while hinging mostly from the hips. This protects the back, and is especially important if the person has acute low back pain or sciatica.

Rising from a chair (Fig 3):

- sit at the edge of a chair
- lift your breastbone up toward your chin
- stand up keeping your chest lifted
- it is alright for your shoulders to move forward of your hips, but be sure to maintain a forward 'C' shape of your spine (Fig. 4).

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Fig. 1 Squatting by bending from the waist which can harm the back.



Fig. 2 Squatting with hip hinge to protect the back.

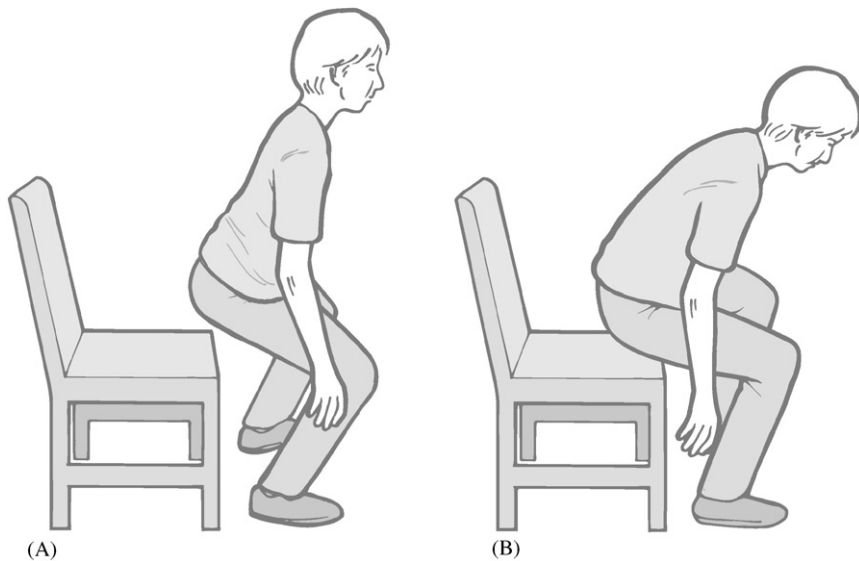


Fig. 3 (A) Correct – rising from a chair by protecting the back with the hip hinge. (B) Incorrect – rising from a chair without the back protected due to slumping forward.

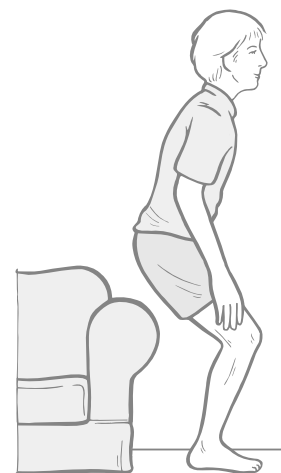


Fig. 4 Using a higher surface to initiate training of the hip hinge.

Note: If this exercise feels uncomfortable then begin with a higher surface such as

- Chair or couches arm rest
- Bar stool