



**American
Physical Therapy
Association**

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PHYSICAL THERAPISTS OFFER TIPS TO PREVENT HOLIDAY ACHEs AND PAINS

ALEXANDRIA, VA. In addition to being emotionally taxing, the holiday season can take a physical toll, says the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Annual rituals such as shopping 'til you drop and lifting presents and heavy boxes can contribute to neck, shoulder, and back injuries.

APTA recommends taking precautions — from maintaining your balance by distributing the weight of shopping bags equally on both sides of your body to lifting boxes by using the legs instead of the back — in order to keep aches or even injuries from putting a damper on the holiday spirit.

APTA member Kendra Harrington, PT, MS, from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, suggests taking the proper precautions to avoid ruining a festive season. "Proper body mechanics can help prevent muscle and joint discomfort," she says.

Lifting

- Test an object's weight before you lift by pushing it with your foot.
- When you lift, keep feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees.
- When you lift, keep feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees. Lift with your legs, not with your back. Stand close to the object, bend your legs, keep your back straight, and lift.
- If a back injury does occur, seek professional consultation from a physical therapist. What starts as a minor problem can become a recurrent problem without early intervention.

Shopping Without Dropping

- Distribute the weight of shopping bags equally on both sides of your body.
- Consider using a fanny-pack or small backpack.
- Wear comfortable shoes; carrying packages while wearing high heels on hard surfaces can contribute to foot and ankle injuries.
- Don't lug overstuffed shopping bags for extended periods.

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The American Physical Therapy Association is a national professional organization representing more than 66,000 physical therapists, physical therapy assistants and students. Its goal is to foster advancements in physical therapy practice, research and education.