Pack it Light. Wear it Right. *Handbags*

Some women carry what seems like the world in their handbag. But a heavy handbag, shoulder bag or purse can injure your back, neck and shoulders. Handbags also create poor posture by encouraging the carrier to lean to one side, which reduces their ability to maintain balance and restricts movement.

Here are some tips to help you prevent injury:

Choosing a handbag:

- Choose a handbag that is proportionate to your body size and not larger than what is needed. Your handbag should not weigh more than 10 to 15 per cent of your weight. Some handbags weigh more than 15 pounds!
- Select a handbag made of lightweight material (vinyl or canvas instead of leather).
- The shoulder straps should be wide, adjustable and padded, if possible. Ensure the straps do not fit too snugly. Poorly designed shoulder straps can dig deep into the muscles and put strain on the nerves.



 If possible, select a strap that is long enough to place over the head to rest on the opposite side of the body to help distribute weight more evenly.



 Choose a handbag that has several individual pockets instead of one large compartment; this will help to distribute the weight evenly and keep contents from shifting.

Packing a handbag:

- Resist the urge to carry everything with you all day. Pay attention to the things that you use most often. Consider leaving some less commonly used items behind.
- Fully clean out your purse once a week.



 Change the size and weight of your wallet once in a while. You may also consider a wallet for your work and a different one for when you go out, as you may need different objects for both.



• Ensure the weight is evenly distributed in the purse by using all the pockets and pack the heaviest items at the bottom.

Carrying a handbag:

- Use both hands to check the weight of the handbag.
- Instead of always carrying your handbag on the same shoulder, switch sides often.
- Square your shoulders many women have a habit of lifting the shoulder the purse is on to keep the straps from slipping.

Other tips:

 Try to maintain good posture. When standing, your head, shoulders, hips and ankles should line up, one comfortably above the other. Your knees should be slightly bent and your feet should be shoulder-width apart or more. For good posture, try to flatten your back against a wall or chair. Roll your shoulders back and down and slowly pull your head and chin back.

- 2. If you can walk to lunch or a meeting, lock your purse in your desk or locker and carry only your cash and/or cards in a pocket.
- Exercise can help prevent injury. Regular exercise such as walking, swimming, or bicycling will help the body stay conditioned. Stretching before and after activities will help reduce muscle strain. Specific strengthening exercises for the back and abdominal or core area will help promote good posture, condition muscles and prevent injury.

Chiropractic can help:

According to Health Canada, 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetimes. As spinal health care experts, chiropractors are trained to provide diagnosis, treatment and preventative care for disorders related to the spine, pelvis, nervous system and joints and can help you check the fit of your handbag.

Injuries resulting from improper lifting and carrying of a heavy load can become chronic and can impact your quality of life. If you experience pain that lasts more than two or three days, call your chiropractor for an evaluation.

To find a chiropractor near you or for more information, go to www.chiropractic.on.ca.

