## Seat slumpers, load lifters alike urged to give their backs breaks

By JENNIFER BELLANTONIO Collegian Staff Writer

In the frenzy to get things done, people are often tempted to take on more than they can handle. Whether it is holding too many groceries while hauling them to the car or moving just one more piece of solid oak furniture, some people do not know their limitations — but their backs do.

"Lower back pain is the number one cause of disability from work for people said. under the age of 45," said Paul Canavan, director of physical therapy at the Center for Sports Medicine.

Most people, at one time or another, have experienced the gnawing discomfort of muscle strain. For the rugged athlete who competes in a physical, high-contact sport or for the construction worker who endlessly lifts and hauls concrete, back problems may not be something out of the ordinary. But for others, back problems may occur from ordinary, simple activi-

"The three most common causes of back problems is incorrect lifting, poor posture

and extended sitting," said Roy Love, president of the Pennsylvania Chiropractic Society.

Although some people do not realize they are slumping over or incorrectly lifting on a daily basis, repetitive incorrect activity may be dangerous.

"Cumulatively, it becomes the phenomenon of 'the straw that breaks the camel's back.' You do it day in and out, then one day you'll find your back irritated," Love

Canavan agreed one of the biggest ways to aggravate a healthy back is incorrect lifting. People are not lifting with their legs and are stooping over, he said. Instead, Canavan said, people should keep the object close to the body, use legs for support and ask for help if they need it.

Judy Dardzinski, outpatient physical therapist at the University's Hershey Medical Center, reiterated Canavan's advice. "We have normal curves in the spine, so

what you want to do is tighten tummy muscles, brace yourself and use your legs when lifting," Dardzinski said.

Francine Poel (graduate-health policy

"I carry a lot of tension in my neck and shoulders. I'll be sitting at a desk, turn the wrong way and muscles will spaz on me."

> - Francine Poel graduate-health policy and administration

and administration) is one student who often tests her back's endurance when lifting heavy objects.

"I always usually try. I'll pick it up to see if I can lift it or carry it a certain distance before it becomes to heavy," Poel said. "Usually if I can get a guy to help, I'll back off, but unfortunately they're not

always around." Eric Apfel (junior-finance) is also guilty of overexerting himself while moving furniture and other items.

"I'm not of afraid of straining my back, muscles will spaz on me," she said.

so I lift whatever I can," Apfel said.

Endless hours of slumping at a desk with eyes fixed on a computer monitor is another activity that presents a problem for many students and office workers.

"The highest degree of pressure on discs (in the back) is found with chairs that have a back support at a 90 degree angle," Canavan said. "A slightly reclined chair with lumbar support reduces the stress on the innerback region."

While the chair may not always be the problem, being stationary is.

"Anyone who uses a computer should take breaks. Don't spend hours straight through so you're not sustaining the neck in one position," Love said.

Instead, he said to ask joints and muscles to move to their full range of motion because this will keep you loose and reduce stress.

Poel said she has experienced neck and shoulder tension while sitting for prolonged periods of time. "I carry a lot of tension in my neck and shoulders. I'll be sitting at a desk, turn the wrong way and

Beside sitting and working, people are often required to assume the tiresome task of carrying a backpack around the length of campus. But Canavan and Love agree ta

backpack is not usually a direct cause. "For an already existing back problem it could make it worse, but other people get used to it," Love said. "It is important to

alternate it from shoulder to shoulder." While back strain can occur over a long period of time, in case of a sudden injury, Canavan said, the combination of rest and ice for the first two days reduces swelling and usually resolves most back problems.

put the backpack on both shoulders or

Treatment for back pain varies from individual to individual. John Swisher, professor of education, said generally physicians are moving away from surgery to exercise and medication. However, even those treatments are personalized.

"There's a comprehensive evaluation to determine the cause of back pain, and the treatment varies from individual to individual," Canavan said. "It's not a cookbook where you say, 'I have back pain so do this.' Everyone is individualistic.'



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Friday, October 20 at 7 PM Pollock Commons Piano Lounge Saturday, October 21 at 8 PM in Warnock Commons Social Lounge

Academy Award nominated writer, producer, and director John Singleton (Boys N the Hood, Poetic Justice) penned the script for his latest drama while he was a student at USC. Set on the campus of fictitious Columbus University, Higher Learning confronts complex issues of drama while he was a student at USC. Set on the campus of fictitious Columbus University, Higher Learning confronts complex issues of identity, sexism and escalating racial tension. Singleton creates a campus that's a microcosm of America to tell three separate stories about three very different people. Former high school track star Malik Williams (Omar Epps) thinks he can cruise through his freshman year—until he learns he has to run faster and harder than anybody else to keep his track scholarship. Socially inept loner Remy (Michael Rapaport) hopes college will be one big party, but he soon finds that if there is a party, he is not invited. Rape victim Kristen Connor's (Kristy Swanson) dates were different in high school they stopped when she said no. Although their experiences are uniquely their own, these young people have one thing in common. They came to learn how to think, but they picked up a strategy for survival instead.

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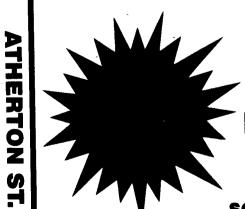
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