

New research goes against mom's advice that routine lifting is bad for your back

April 15 2010

New University of Alberta research disputes advice that routine lifting is bad for your back. Tapio Videman's research found that physical loading, the pressure put on the spine that comes with, for example, frequent lifting, may in fact slightly delay disc degeneration.

Tapio Videman says back disorders in the working population are among the most costly illnesses in developed countries around the world. Disc degeneration is the main suspected origin of severe back symptoms and the main target in [spine](#) surgery. But Videman, a researcher in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, wants to dispute the common perception that disc degeneration is caused by physical loading, the pressure put on the spine that comes with, for example, frequent [lifting](#). Videman's research team found that more physical loading may in fact slightly delay disc degeneration as it's known to be good for the bones, muscles and tendons.

Videman studied identical male twins where one of the siblings was, on average, 29 pounds heavier than the other. According to Videman, the most prevalent source of physical loading is what each individual is carrying around on a daily basis: their own body weight. What Videman's research found is that there was no evidence that the loading in the form of extra body weight was harmful to the person's spinal discs. In fact, the heavier twin had slightly less [disc degeneration](#) compared to the lighter twin.

What's Videman's take-home message? Routine physical loading is not

bad for a disc, within limits. Videman says these findings have immediate implications for preventative strategies and patient education. He says people who are unsure about physical-loading activities while at work, home or at the gym because of fear of harming their back, should challenge their spines by gradually increasing daily physical loading.

More information: Videman's research was recently published in The Spine Journal. The paper won The Spine Journal's Outstanding Paper Award for Medical and Interventional Science.

Provided by University of Alberta

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