

**A LITTLE BACKGROUND**

Scott Donkin is an internationally published author, chiropractor and consultant in private practice in Lincoln.

An expert on use of the physical environment to promote balance, physical performance, safety and longevity, he is the author of "Sitting on the Job" and co-author of "Peak Performance Body & Mind: How to Make Your Body Last a Lifetime."

He regularly consults with government agencies on safety practices, with companies on ergonomic and health issues for employees, and with manufacturers of such products as office furniture, bedding, pillows and airline seats.

**Lincoln chiropractor Scott Donkin shows Kathy Jacobs the proper way to vacuum. It's important to distribute the force and leverage of your pushing and pulling by stepping forward and back with your legs.**



PHOTOS BY RENT SIEVERS/THE WORLD-HERALD

# Sweep away the pain of housework

BY SANDRA WENDEL

**H**ousework. Most people think it's a pain in the you-know-what. And for some people, the pain is very real.

Household tasks such as ironing, vacuuming, sweeping, washing dishes and laundry can create as much strain, pain and stress on the body as athletics.

### Labor intensive

Scott Donkin, a Lincoln chiropractor, sees patients who have

## Domestic chores don't have to hurt

painful backs, stiff necks and sore wrists from scrubbing a floor or washing dishes. These maladies can be avoided through healthier methods and smarter tools to accomplish them.

Household chores can cause pain everywhere, from necks and shoulders to arms, wrists and hips. Such activities also can trigger headaches and anxiety. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

hitting any head on: the top bunk bed until I faint."

According to Donkin, the first step on the pain to injury-free housework is to think about these tasks less as chores and more as pleasant activities.

"Because we can choose our thoughts," Donkin says, "I recommend that patients turn a favorite tune or view a special photo to stir a physical reaction that increases their heart rate and makes them smile. These happy thoughts trans-

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# All the right moves

## IRONING

Position the ironing board slightly less than waist high so you're not bending forward too far. Put the to-be-ironed pile and hangers at board level on a table or countertop to avoid reaching. Hang newly ironed clothes at eye level for the same reason. If you are ironing a prolonged period of time, try shifting your feet farther apart to change the weight distribution to knees, hips and back. You also can try moving one foot forward of the other to shift knee, hip and back pressures. Don't

balance? Do you twist your upper body and shoulders, concentrating all the force in your shoulders while you push and pull? Bend your knees slightly and hold your body in a more upright, balanced position.

Whether you use an upright vacuum or a canister-type, put the handle in the best position to accommodate your height. If you're shorter, you can increase the leverage by holding the handle lower. When lifting the vacuum cleaner up or down stairs or over obstacles, try using both hands and keep the vacuum cleaner as close to your body as practical. Watch your step to avoid

locking your knees. And, yes, watch TV if it's in front of you and the ironing board. Watching TV forces you to look up from the downward gaze of your eyes, from time to time.

## VACUUMING

Distribute the force and leverage of your pushing and pulling by stepping forward and back with your legs. Don't overreach with your arms and shoulders. In fact, glance at yourself in a mirror. Are you stooping forward so your posture is off-

tripping or slipping over the cord.

## LOADING/UNLOADING THE DISHWASHER, WASHER AND DRYER

Place the clothes basket at the same level as the machine, perhaps on a stool. Don't bend at the waist and lift wet objects out by straightening your back. Your knees were built for bending, so use them in that way. Even slight bending of the knees can take a lot of pressure away from the lower back. Lift the laundry basket by moving your legs close to the basket, use your legs, squat lower for deeper

lifts. Keep your head up, now lift. Use this same technique for carrying groceries, luggage and other heavy items, too.

If you need to reach for the laundry detergent or upper kitchen cabinets, think about ways to reorganize and move these items to lower shelves more easily reached. Use a step stool carefully to place items higher than you can comfortably reach.

## WASHING DISHES

Place one foot on a step stool and slightly bend the other knee. This is a similar stance you might take while

waiting in line if you have something to step your foot onto (such as the grocery cart at the supermarket). Look up from time to time. If you're lucky enough to have a window over your sink, place a bird feeder there.

Loading a dishwasher often requires bending, twisting and reaching — three strikes working against you. If you cannot avoid these movements, try to eliminate one (or better yet two) of them at any given moment. Whenever possible have two people load the dishwasher and position yourselves so twisting is minimized. Loading goes much more quickly, too.

— Sandra Wendel



Julia Horgan, right, and Jacobs empty the dishwasher. Loading a dishwasher often requires bending, twisting and reaching — three strikes that work against you.

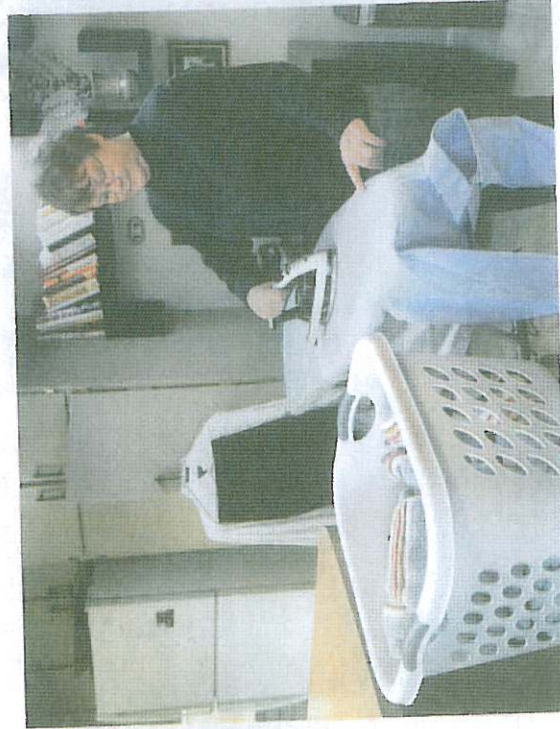
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late into happier, more positive attitudes."

## How injury happens

Consider the movements made while ironing, vacuuming and sweeping. These chores all involve slight forward bending at the waist, movement of the arms forward of the body, and forward head/neck bending. Even a slight forward bend causes pressure in the spine.

Perform that back-and-forth motion over and over, and you have a formula for overexertion injury — and pain.



Horgan, above, shows the proper way to empty the dryer. Slightly bending the knees takes pressure off the lower back.

Jacobs, left, demonstrates the proper way to iron. The ironing board should be slightly less than waist high so you're not bending too far.

and work, especially if you sit all day on your job.

Sandra Wendel is a freelance health writer in the Omaha area. She is a frequent contributor to HealthWise.

For warm-up exercises and how to unwind, visit [omaha.com](http://omaha.com) and click on HealthWise.



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