

# Ergonomic Strategies for Using a Purse



## Effects of wearing a heavy purse

- Heavy purses worn over one shoulder cause uneven weight distribution across the back muscles and may restrict blood flow at the shoulder.
- Heavy purses and shoulder straps without padding place extra pressure on the nerves of the neck and shoulders and can result in pain in the neck, shoulders and lower back. Pain may be described as pins and needles, tingling, stiffness, numbness, or tightness.
- Avoid carrying a purse with your thumbs—this might cause excess pressure on the joints in your hands or fingers.

## Tips for selecting the right purse

- Buy different sizes of purses for different occasions. The size of your purse should reflect specific activities:
  - Short errands—small, compact purse
  - Long errands—small backpack or knapsack worn around the waist
- Avoid heavily loading tote-style bags, which are worn over the shoulder.
- Select purses with built-in compartments. This will help to distribute the weight more evenly.
- Choose a handbag that is proportionate to your body size and no larger than what is needed.
- Avoid selecting purses made of heavy material such as leather, which adds extra weight! Instead, select handbags made of lighter materials such as microfiber and fabric.
- Straps: Avoid thin and long straps; straps should be wide and adjustable. Ensure that pressure caused by the straps does not cause discomfort.

## Tips for packing your purse correctly

- Consider the contents of your purse—can you leave some items at home or in your car?
- Eliminate unnecessary duplicate contents, such as extra pens and lipsticks.
- Wallet: Regularly empty your wallet of coins. Reduce the number of cards you carry; many places can access your account without the proof of your card.
- Toiletries: Look for travel-size options for items you may need, such as lotions, make-up, and hand sanitizers.
- Cell phone: Clip your cell phone to your waist.
- Keys: Leave keys you do not use on a regular basis at home.
- Accessories: Limit the number of accessories in your purse.
- Medication: Request sample-sized medications.

## Tips for carrying your purse correctly

- Purses with short handles:
  - Switch positions frequently to avoid fatigue from muscle overuse.
- Purses with shoulder straps
  - Place the strap diagonally across the opposite shoulder to help distribute weight evenly across the back.
  - Square your shoulders and avoid lifting your shoulders to keep the straps from slipping.
  - Alternate shoulders by switching the bag from side to side.
  - While wearing your purse, consider resting it on a counter if you are standing at a checkout counter.

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