

## Ladies, lighten your load!



### *The simple shoulder bag is creating some serious spinal issues.*

Your natural posture is disrupted when you carry one, and loading it with heavy items adds to the strain on your spine. This asymmetric load also causes the opposite side to go into spasm to compensate as it attempts to stabilise your spine. The muscle spasm and fatigue may also affect lower down at the base of the spine, forcing all the muscles below the shoulders to work even harder. Not only can it cause a lot of stiffness and eventually soreness in the upper back, the shoulder area and the neck, it has been associated with a decreased curve in the neck, then speeds up degeneration in the spine, and this can cause many ongoing problems. Whenever possible, carry your handbag in your hand and exchange sides regularly or consider using a bag with a longer strap for cross-body wearing to distribute the weight more evenly. Another great tip is to lighten the load a bit by emptying out all nonessential items. A general rule of thumb is to never carry more than five percent of your body weight. Sometimes it can be months before you realise that you're carrying around half your house in your bag!

It may seem like such a little thing but correcting this habit can help protect your spine and body from unnecessary stress which in turn helps you stay healthy. Many women notice a significant improvement to their comfort levels when they make a specific effort to modify their handbag carrying behaviour.

Begin to start avoiding the habitual go-to shoulder – this can be tricky at first but before too long you will have broken the habit. It won't take long and you will be well used to carrying your bag in a more ergonomic and healthy way.

*Reference: Your Chiropractor Newsletter September/October 2016*