

CURE FOR A BAG BACK

By Siobhan O'Connor

We reveal the types of handbag that could be causing your back pain – and what you should switch to to cure it.

Chiropractor Tim Hutchful reveals whether you need to bag or bin your favourite tote.

IF you have a bad back, it could be down to your bag.

Three-quarters of women have had back pain, while 46 per cent wear bags on one side of their body – a key cause of aches, says the British Chiropractic Association (BCA).

Here, **SIOBHAN O'CONNOR** tries out a range of bags before chiropractor Tim Hutchful gives his verdict on whether to BAG or BIN your old favourites, and explains good and bad ways to carry them.



Tote

Heavy tote bags can cause an imbalance of weight on your spine.

Tim says: Bags worn on only one side of the body can cause an imbalance of weight on your spine.

To avoid getting “drop-shoulder” – where one shoulder is lower than the other – ensure you alternate arms when wearing it.

Good: Pack light and swap shoulders. Make sure you regularly empty a large bag like this so you only carry what you need.

Bad: It can be filled with too many items, which can restrict movement and strain muscles.

Overall: BIN IT



Holdall

Holdalls can get heavy very quickly, so make sure yours has a strap to balance the weight.

Tim says: Sports bags and weekend bags can get very heavy, very quickly. If it doesn't have an across-the-body strap, all of the weight will sit on one side of your body, pulling your spine out of line.

Ideally, it's best to get one with a handle and wheels which can be pulled along like a suitcase so you can alternate the weight.

Good: Use the long strap to wear it across the body to balance the weight.

Bad: Holding it in the crook of your arm can damage your posture and will build tension.

Overall: BIN IT



Clutch

The closer a bag is to your body, the better - so clutches can be ideal.

Tim says: Generally, the closer a bag is to your body, the better.

A clutch bag is one of the better options, compared with larger, heavier bags and it is easier to wear against the body.

Good: Wear a small clutch under your armpit but swap sides regularly so you don't build up tension in one shoulder.

Bad: A heavier clutch, held a full arm's length away, could pull your shoulder down on one side, pulling on your neck as your body cannot offset the weight.

Overall: BAG IT



Cross body

A cross body bag can help to distribute weight evenly across your back

Tim says: A small bag with long strap that can be worn across the body helps to distribute weight evenly. And you can't fill this with unnecessary stuff that would weigh down your shoulder.

Good: Wear across your body so the weight sits evenly – and wear it on the highest loop.

Bad: Avoid letting it hang in one hand – the lower it sits, the more you risk neck and back pain, as well as leg ache.

Overall: BAG IT



Satchel

Don't wear your satchel like this - put the strap across your shoulders and put the bag down at regular intervals

Tim says: Laptop and messenger bags, filled with work or a laptop, can weigh down your shoulder on a daily basis.

It's best to invest in a satchel like this that has a top handle and a long strap.

Good: To avoid causing back pain on your commute, use the longer strap. Set your bag down when you are on a train or bus.

Bad: Try not to carry it by the handle – the heavy weight will strain your arm, neck and back.

Overall: BAG IT - but be careful!



Top handle

This is the wrong way to wear your bag - opt to hold it as a clutch instead.

Tim says: Could cause pain if used regularly because the small handle stops the bag being held near the body.

Bags like this, often made of sturdy materials, can also risk neck and back pain when filled.

Good: Wherever possible, wear under your armpit like a clutch.

Bad: Carrying a bag like this in the crook of your arm can put pressure on the neck and shoulder because the weight is positioned away from the body and lower down.

Overall: *BIN IT*



Backpack

Using a backpack is the best way to look after your health.

Tim says: This is the best option if you want to look after your back, as the two straps allow you to distribute the weight evenly across your shoulders.

When buying a backpack, remember that the wider the straps, the better. It's also best to avoid thin straps.

Good: Adjust the straps so that the bag sits higher up and close to your back.

Bad: Avoid hanging it on just one shoulder as this will strain your neck.

Overall: *BAG IT*

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