

Stiff Neck? Aching Back? Think It's Stress? It Could Be Your Bra

(NAPSA)—Finding the right bra can not only help you look your best, but may help you feel your best. That's because having the right support can help prevent neck, back and shoulder pain.

Approximately three in five (59 percent) U.S. women who wear a bra say it causes back, shoulder or neck pain, according to a survey, conducted by Harris Interactive®, and commissioned by the North American Spine Society (NASS) and Maidenform, Inc.

While the vast majority of women who wear a bra agree that comfort is their most important consideration when choosing a bra (87 percent), about three in five (59 percent) agree that their bra never seems to fit them quite right, and about two in five (41 percent) agree their bra does not provide the support they need.

According to Dr. Marjorie Eskay-Auerbach, NASS board member and a leading physician at the SpineCare and Forensic Medicine Center in Tucson, Arizona, "More and more women are complaining about back pain and some of this is directly attributable to innerwear that doesn't provide proper support. Many women do not know exactly what to look for in a bra and through simple education and a professional bra fitting some of this back pain can be alleviated."

What's to Blame?

The survey revealed that women who experience back, shoulder or neck pain attributed to their bra are most likely to cite the straps (62 percent). Forty-four percent cite the bra's band around the ribcage and 25 percent attribute the under wire as the part that makes them the most uncomfortable.

As a result, more than half (53 percent) of women whose bras cause them pain have tried to solve the issue by purchasing a new bra, and about two in five (41



percent) have loosened the straps while wearing their bra.

Only 12 percent of wearers have sought professional advice on how to find a better fitting bra.

"Wearing an ill-fitting bra can cause women to hunch over and practice poor posture. Women need to wear bras that give them support and a fit that provides comfort for backs, shoulders and necks. Finding a bra with the right support and form is not only a matter of comfort, but also an important factor for overall spine health," says Dr. Eskay-Auerbach.

More Complaints by Younger Women

Attitudes about bra fit and function vary by generation. Compared to their older counterparts, younger women are more likely to agree that their bra never seems to fit exactly right (71 percent women 18-34 vs. 49 percent women 55+) and that their breasts often bounce when they walk (53 percent women 18-34 vs. 29 percent women 55+). Younger women also shared that the shoulder straps of their bra always fall off (47 percent women 18-34 vs. 25 percent women 55+).

Getting the Right Fit

Fran Musante, fit expert at Maidenform, says, "First and foremost women need to be properly supported. The fact is, bras don't cause pain—really it's the weight of the breasts that cause it. But it

can almost always be corrected with a professional fitting and the right bra."

According to Musante, most women wear the wrong size bra. It is critical that women be properly measured and fitted for their bras every three years to help avoid discomfort.

Whether women are full-figured or small-busted, many bras available today offer a custom-like fit that is contoured for each body type.

"Our bodies change and regular fittings are the best way to avoid discomfort that may lead to back pain," says Musante. "A bra that fits properly should be so comfortable you shouldn't even feel like you have it on."

NASS and Maidenform developed the following tips for women to follow to help alleviate back pain and ensure the perfect fit for optimal support and maximum comfort:

- **Determine Your True Bra Size**—Women can measure themselves using guidelines at www.maidenform.com or with a professional fitting in their local department store.
- **Try on Several Different Bras**—Find a bra that provides the level of support needed. Many women think the shoulder straps should hold the breasts, however, breast tissue should be properly supported from the under wire or undercut panel. Straps anchor the bra in place.
- **Update Your Bra Wardrobe Annually**—With typical washing and wearing, bras lose their ability to support over time. Because bust size changes frequently due to factors such as weight loss or gain, pregnancy and age, women should get fitted at least every two years.

For guidelines on how to determine whether you are wearing the correct bra size, log on to www.maidenform.com.