

A Physical Therapist Talks About Getting Your Healthy Back “Back”

Good Lower Back Practices for NOW and LATER

What To Do NOW If You Just Hurt Your Back

Most back pain gets better in 2 to 4 weeks

1. Ice and Heat

- For the first 48 hours after an injury, ice for 10 – 20 minutes at least 2 to 3 times a day
- After 48 hours, heat can be applied for 10 – 20 minutes 2 to 3 times a day to help with muscle spasms that often happen with low back pain
- Avoid direct or prolonged contact to the skin with heat or ice to prevent hot or cold burn injuries
- Be especially careful with heat or ice if you have thin skin or a health condition that causes poor circulation or ability to feel hot or cold (such as diabetes, neuropathy)
- How you ice and heat depends on what makes you feel better; there is more evidence to support the use of heat than ice, but both are worth a try

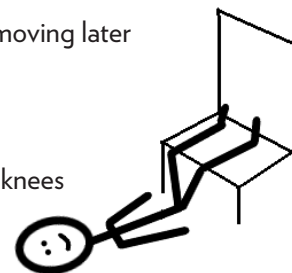
2. Rest and Take It Easy for 1 – 2 Days

- Rest does not mean “stay in bed”, it means take it easy
- Cut back on activities that caused the back pain or make it feel worse
- It is important to keep moving as much as your body will allow
- Talk to your doctor about “too much bed rest” because that can make it harder to heal and get moving later

It is best to change your position throughout the day

3. Try the Recovery Position for 10 Minutes When You Need It

- Lie on back (keep entire back and hips flat) with knees higher than hips and feet no higher than knees
- You can lie on back with legs raised on pillows or on the floor with legs up on the couch or chair



4. Get Moving in 2 – 3 Days

- Begin a walking program a few days after your injury wearing good, supportive shoes
- Start with how far you can walk without too much discomfort, even if just 5 minutes
- Increase gradually over time
- The general goal is 20 – 30 minutes a day if there is not a big increase in pain

You have more control over your back than you know – don't be afraid to get moving

When your back hurts, a good history and physical can be more useful than an x-ray. Your doctor may ask:

Do your legs or feet have pain, numbness, tingling, or just feel weak? • How many times has this happened before?

What did you do to make it feel better? • How is your pain affecting your daily activities?

Does moving around make it worse or does resting make it worse? • How quickly does it get worse if you sit or stand or move?

Is it better or worse if you...Bend forward? ...Arch backward? ...Sit? ...Stand?

Your doctor may recommend a physical therapist, chiropractor, massage, yoga, or other therapy to help speed recovery and teach new ways to help get and keep a healthy back

References available at: <https://msp.scdhhs.gov//tipsc/site-page/healthybackrefs>

Disclaimer:

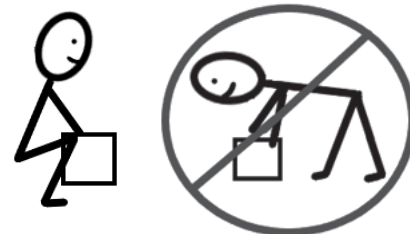
This handout is a brief overview in the non-drug management of adults with low back pain seen in a primary care setting, is advisory only, and does not replace instructions from your healthcare provider. **Your provider can advise you which information may be useful and if, in your case, you should avoid any of the suggestions discussed.**

Good Back Practices for NOW and LATER to Help Manage and Prevent Low Back Pain

ERGONOMICS – PROPER MOVEMENT AND SITTING HABITS

Avoid bending forward at waist to lift things

- Stand close to object. Always bend knees (squat or half-kneeling position) and keep object close to your body. Use power of legs to lift and stand up.
- Do not twist while lifting



Avoid twisting at the waist

- Be aware that some everyday activities involve twisting
 1. Learn the proper way to get in and out of car (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmkfrJnTA9o>)
 2. Learn the proper way to get in and out of bed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y94T300Dhvw>)
 3. Learn proper loading and unloading (for example, washer/dryer, dishwasher, child in car seat, stocking shelves, grocery bags)

Avoid poor sitting posture (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvSFR1qpyLg>)

- Choose a chair that best helps you sit upright and not slouch
 - A small rolled towel at belt level between you and chair may help you sit “up right”
- Keep knees and hips same distance from floor
- Change your position or move around a minute after every 30 to 60 minutes of sitting

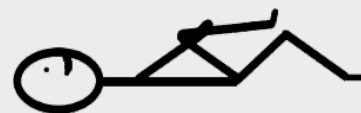
Avoid any combination of bending, lifting, and twisting at the same time

STRETCHES AND EXERCISES (REMEMBER TO BREATHE)

Lie on your back on a firm surface and bend both knees to begin ALL exercises (see pictures below)

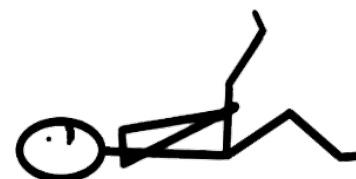
Single Knee to Chest Stretch

Pull one bent knee gently toward chest.
Hold for 20 seconds then lower leg.
Now do the same with the other leg. REPEAT THIS 3 TIMES



Hamstring Stretch

Bring one bent knee up toward chest.
Grab behind knee and keep leg at arms length.
Straighten leg in the air until you feel a stretch on back of thigh.
Hold 20 seconds, then lower leg.
Now do the same with other leg. REPEAT THIS 3 TIMES



Piriformis Stretch

Cross right leg over left leg, resting right ankle on thigh area just above left knee.
Grab right knee and pull right leg toward left shoulder.
Hold 20 seconds, return to start position.
Now do the same on the other side. REPEAT THIS 3 TIMES



Pelvic Tilt

Tighten stomach muscles.
Flatten the curve in the low back toward the surface you are lying on.
Gently press down ONLY until you reach your “most comfortable” position.
Hold 5 seconds, return to start position. REPEAT THIS 10 TIMES
Don't hold your breath.



Brace Marching

Do a pelvic tilt and stay in this position the entire time.
Lift right foot JUST ONE INCH, then set it down softly.
Now do the same with left foot.
Don't forget to hold “most comfortable” position.
Don't hold your breath. REPEAT THIS 10 TIMES

