



Back Care And You

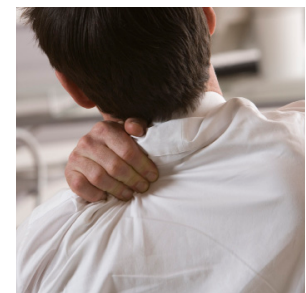
- Are You at Risk for Injury?
- Keeping Your Back Healthy
- Easing Back Pain



Are you at risk for injury?

Lifestyle Factors that Increase Your Risk for Back Injury:

- Smoking
- Being overweight
- Leading a sedentary lifestyle
- Chronic stress
- Having arthritis or osteoporosis
- Improper lifting techniques



It is estimated that back pain will happen to 75% of us at some time in our lives. How do you become part of the 25%? Look over the following areas of your lifestyle to find out what puts you at higher risk.



Work Requirements That Increase Your Risk For Back Injury:

- Frequent bending or lifting
- Twisting when carrying or lifting objects
- Lifting and carrying loads repetitively and/or in a hurry
- Working or lifting in confined spaces

Caregiver Responsibilities That Increase Your Risk For Back Injury

- Pulling or repositioning a person in a bed or chair
- Moving a person from a bed to a chair and/or toilet
- Bending over a person for extended periods





Your back has to be flexible and strong so it can withstand the stress of moving your body to stand, walk, twist, bend, turn and lift. Most lower back pain is due to a spasm of the muscles that support the spinal column. Overstretching these muscles can strain them, causing tears in the muscle fibers. The following back care ideas will help you keep your back healthy, and if you have a back problem, will help you manage it.

- **Stay aligned.** Maintain proper posture when sitting, standing and lifting.
- **Keep your abdominal, lower back and thigh muscles strong.** Exercise these muscles regularly.
- **Warm up** by walking for 5 to 7 minutes and then stretch before you do lifting or twisting movements.
- **Learn to manage stress.** Practice relaxation techniques. Avoid using alcohol or drugs to manage the stress in your life.
- **Reduce your back load.** Maintain a healthy body weight. Learn how to lift properly. Get help if your load is too bulky or too heavy.
- **Follow posted safety procedures** to avoid slips and falls. Always use the recommended personal protective equipment.
- **Take stretch breaks.** If you sit or stand for extended periods of time, try to take a stretch break every hour.





Easing Back Pain



Try these tips if you have back pain that does not require a doctor's attention.

- **Limit activity.** Bed rest for more than a day or two is not advised.
- **Take pressure off your spine.** Lie on your side with your knees bent and support your legs with a pillow.
- **Take aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen** to reduce pain and inflammation. Use as directed.
- **Apply ice packs** if you have a sudden injury. Apply for 20 minutes on; 20 minutes off.
- **Physical Therapy.** Apply heat to ease pain and relax muscles. Wait 48 hours after an acute injury before applying heat.



Call the doctor if you...

- Are injured from a fall or from being hit in the back and are unable to move your legs.
- Have pain or numbness that moves from your back into your leg or foot.
- Have severe pain even though you can still move.
- Experience lower back pain with other symptoms such as painful or frequent urination, flu, gastrointestinal distress or abdominal pain.
- Have lower back pain with loss of bowel or bladder control.
- Have tried self-care measures and they fail to provide relief after 72 hours.
- Have lower back pain with weakness of any leg or foot muscles.