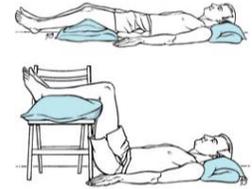


# Back Pain

## Preventing and Relieving Back Pain

### What To Do When Back Pain Starts

- **Lie down with your back on a flat surface.** Place a pillow under your knees and head in either of the two positions shown to the right.
- These positions take pressure and weight off your back.
- Try to walk around very slowly for a few minutes every hour.
- See a doctor to discuss what is causing the pain and if you should perform the activities listed on this handout.



### How to Treat Back Pain

#### What can I do for ongoing back pain?

- Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight puts pressure on your back.
- Stay active. Try exercises such as walking or swimming.

#### What can I do for short-term relief?

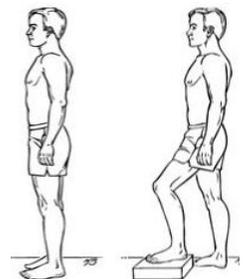
- Use heat pads or ice packs for 20-30 minutes at a time on the area that hurts.
- Relax in a hot shower or bath.

### When To Call Your Doctor

- Your pain goes down your leg.
- Your leg, foot, groin or buttocks is numb.
- You have fever, nausea, vomiting or weakness.
- Your pain is so bad you can't move.
- Your pain does not go down after 2 weeks.
- Your pain was caused by an injury.
- You lose control of your urine or stool.

### Preventing Back Strain

- **Lifting:** Bend your knees and hips, squat, and lift with your legs muscles. Do not lift by bending your back.
- **Moving heavy objects:** Push rather than pull.
- **Sitting:** Sit upright and not slouched. Get up and stretch.
- **Walking:** Don't hold yourself stiffly. Your arms should swing. Don't hang your head down unless you need to look down at something.
- **Shoes:** Wear flat shoes or shoes with low heels (1 inch or lower) with arch support.
- **Standing for long periods of time:** Rest 1 foot on a low stool to relieve pressure on your lower back. Every 5 to 10 minutes switch the foot you're resting on the stool.



# Back Exercises

It is important to keep your back muscles flexible. Your back muscles can help you maintain good posture. Do not do any exercises that cause pain.

## Gently Stretch Back Muscles:



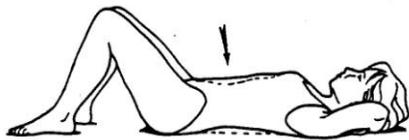
- 1) Lie on your back with your knees bent and slowly raise your left knee toward your chest so that you feel a light stretch.
- 2) Very gently press your lower back toward the floor.
- 3) Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- 4) Relax and repeat the exercise with your right knee.
- 5) Do 10 of these exercises for each leg.

## Low Back Release:

- 1) Sit in a chair with feet on the floor hip width apart.
- 2) Place your palms on your legs as you bend forward, until your belly rests on your thighs. Hang your head and arms down loosely.
- 3) If your belly cannot rest on your thighs, instead rest your hands and elbows on your legs for support.



## Pelvic Tilt for Low Back Mobility:



- 1) Lie on your back with your knees bent; the bottoms of your feet should be on the floor hip width apart.
- 2) Gently press your low back to the floor by letting your belly and ribs sink and slightly tilting your pelvis, so your tailbone comes slightly away from the floor.
- 3) Hold for 3-5 seconds and then release. Repeat several times.

## Back Strengthening Exercise:

- 1) Lay with your belly on the floor and your arms at your sides.
- 2) Slowly lift your head and let your upper chest come away from the floor. Only do what is comfortable.
- 3) Hold for 3-5 seconds and then release. Repeat several times.



## Hip Flexor Stretch:



- 1) Step into a lunge with your front leg bent, making sure that your front knee is directly over your ankle.
- 2) Place your hands on either side of your front foot. Keep your back leg bent with your knee on the floor.
- 3) You will feel a stretch as you lean forward.
- 4) Hold for 3-5 seconds. Repeat several times for each leg.