

Preventing and Relieving Back Pain



Prevention

- **Be active.** Do muscle-strengthening and stretching exercises at least 2 days a week, or try yoga and other kinds of moderate activities.
- **Posture.** Stand and sit up straight. If you can, switch between standing and sitting frequently.
- **Lifting.** Avoid heavy lifting. If you do lift something heavy, bend your knees and keep your back straight.
- **Diet.** Eat healthy and get enough calcium and vitamin D.

Ways to Treat Pain

- **Use cold packs** to help relieve some back pain and hot packs to increase blood flow and promote healing in the muscles and tissues of the back.
- **Avoid bedrest;** instead, limit activities or exercise that cause pain. Gradually increase physical activity as you can.
- Lifestyle changes to move your body properly when performing daily activities, especially those involving heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling. Avoid any activities that cause or increase pain.
- **Practice healthy habits,** such as exercise, relaxation, regular sleep, healthy diet, and quitting smoking.

When to See Your Doctor

If your back pain hasn't gotten better within a week of treatment at home, call your provider. You should also schedule a visit if your back pain:

- Is constant or intense, especially at night or when lying down
- Spreads down one or both legs, especially if the pain goes below the knee
- Causes weakness, numbness, or tingling in one or both legs
- Occurs with swelling or redness on the back

Seek emergency medical care if pain occurs after trauma (like a car accident), creates stomach or bladder control problems, or occurs with a fever.