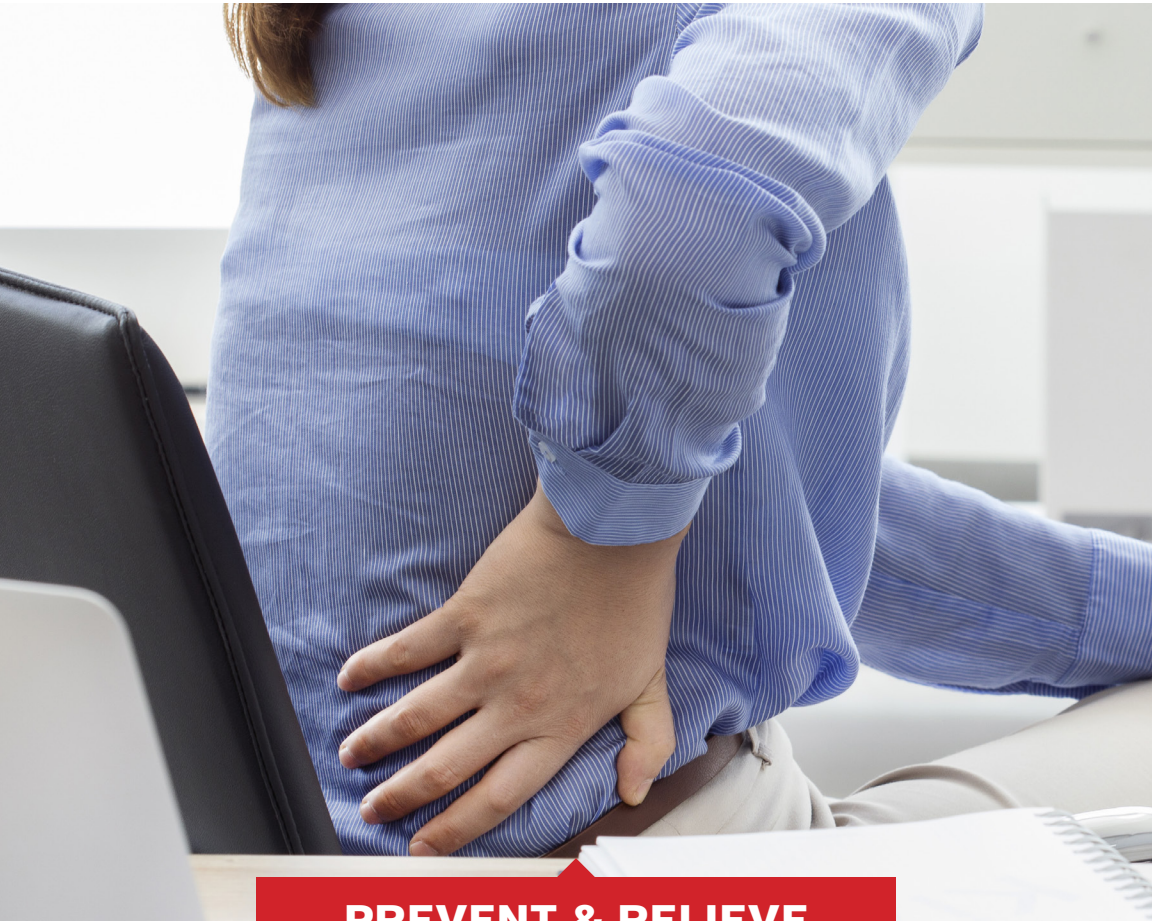


**FREE E-BOOK**



**PREVENT & RELIEVE**

# **BACK PAIN**

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**5 EASY WAYS TO RELIEVE BACK PAIN  
NATURALLY AND EFFECTIVELY.**

Physical Therapists are Back Pain Specialists!

# BACK PAIN

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**DISCLAIMER:** The content in this booklet is not meant to replace the medical advice of your personal physician or physical therapist. Always consult your physician and/or physical therapist for specialized, one-on-one assessments and treatments.

If you're experiencing back pain, we feel for you. Even if your back pain resolves itself in a day or two, the experience can feel debilitating, perhaps affecting your ability to work or actively participate in your daily life.

But as a sufferer of back pain, it's important to know a few things right from the start:

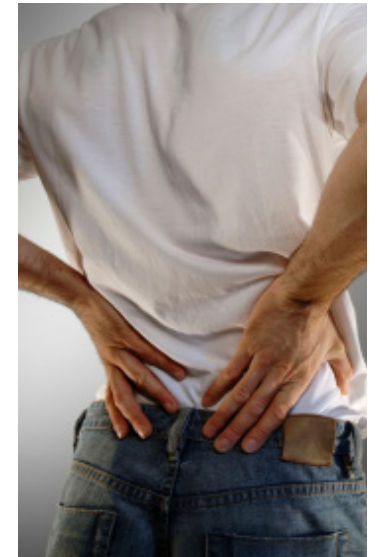
**You're Not Alone:** During their lifetimes, eight of every 10 people in the U.S. will experience back pain at some point. In fact, over the last 3 months, about a quarter of Americans have experienced pain in their lower backs.

**The Causes are Many:** The list of factors that may cause and/or make you more susceptible to back pain is quite long. From fitness level, weight gain and age, to posture, work conditions and the general coordination and movement of your body, back pain can be a sign of issues elsewhere in the body.

**It Can Be Debilitating:** Studies show that low-back pain is the No. 1-leading cause of disability worldwide. Even short-term pain in the spine can limit one's ability work, and it can also create hindrances throughout nearly every aspect of your life.

**Movement Matters:** While resting a sore back seems like an obvious first step toward relief, studies actually show the opposite. For some conditions, movement and exercise can actually provide quicker healing and relief for the spine than doing nothing at all.

**Physical Therapists are Back Pain Specialists:** Studies have shown that those suffering from back pain who see a physical therapist early are considerably less likely to follow a treatment path that leads them to expensive tests, surgeries, or even opioid prescriptions. *More on this later.*



Back pain is the No. 1 cause of disability worldwide. In the U.S., 8 in 10 people will experience back pain in their lives.



## Why does my **BACK HURT?**

Back pain can seemingly occur without warning, but many times it works itself out within a few days or weeks. This is called **Acute Back Pain**, and it can sometimes be caused by sudden or awkward movements, a fall, or improper lifting.

In contrast, **Chronic Back Pain** is pain in your spine that lasts three months or more.

So, what causes back pain? From a medical standpoint, such pain is commonly linked to the following conditions, according to the Mayo Clinic:

- Muscle or Ligament Strain
- Bulging or Ruptured Disks in the Spine
- Arthritis
- Skeletal Irregularities
- Osteoporosis

Only a physician or a physical therapist can properly diagnose the specific conditions that may cause you to suffer from back pain. However, the following risk factors may indicate you're more susceptible to experiencing back pain in your life:

- Advanced Age
- Lack of Exercise
- Excess Body Weight & Obesity
- Improper Lifting / Awkward Movements
- Smoking
- Depression & Anxiety
- Diseases [i.e., Arthritis, some Cancers]

The good news is that if you're currently experiencing back pain, you can often find relief on your own. Consider advice on the following pages to relieve the pain naturally and effectively.

# 1

## THE ROLE OF ICE & HEAT!

Applying ice or heat (or both) to the sore area of your back can often provide a level of comfort and relief to that area, and perhaps even help with the healing process.

Which works best? Well, that takes a certain level of experimentation. It's different for each person, but here's a guide to help you figure out which option to start with.

### Benefits of Cold Therapy

The two primary benefits one will typically find through the use of a cold pack on her/his back is:

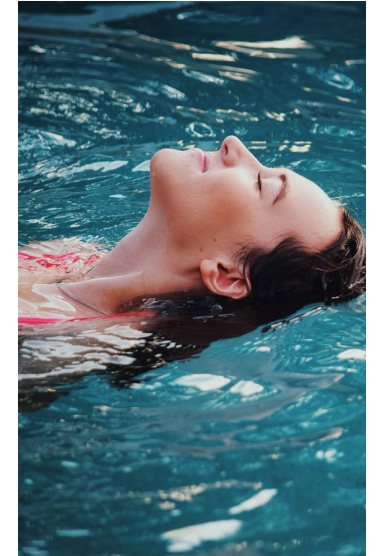
- Cold reduces inflammation and swelling, which is often one of the primary causes of pain.
- Ice can help provide an analgesic effect to the area while reducing nerve spasms, which typically lead to pain.

### Benefits of Heat Therapy

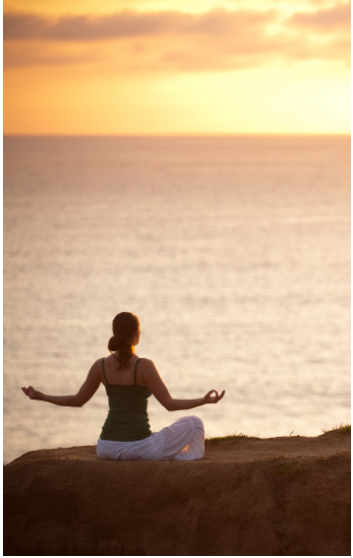
In contrast, use of heat or a warm pack helps promote blood flow within the sore area of the back, which plays an important role in the healing process. In addition, heat provides relief to the area by helping mute pain messages that get sent to the brain.

Heat can be applied in a number of ways. Beyond a store-bought heat pack, heat therapy can take the form of a warm bath, soaking in a hot tub, and even a hot shower.

In general, the rule of thumb is to use cold for acute pain within the first 24 to 48 hours, then switch to heat, if needed.



Heat dilates the blood vessels in the muscles near the spine, which helps it heal by increasing oxygen and nutrients to the muscles.



Good posture helps your body stay balanced and aligned, ensuring the least strain possible is placed on your body.

**M**aintaining good posture is essential in helping prevent or reduce the incidence of back and neck pain in your life. Good posture helps your body stay balanced and aligned, ensuring the least strain possible is placed on your muscles and ligaments when you move.

When you slouch, in contrast, you're putting unnecessary strain on your muscles and ligaments, which have to work harder to keep you balanced. Whether you're sitting, standing, walking, or even lying down, this added strain puts additional pressure on your spine and will often lead to discomfort, pain and even injury to your back.

#### The Value of Good Posture

When your mother would tell you to stand up straight, she was teaching you a valuable trait that could save you from a lifetime of back discomfort and pain. After all, good posture offers a number of long-term wellness benefits including:

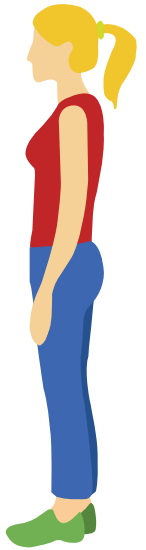
- Keeping the bones and joints aligned so your muscles work properly.
- Helping decrease abnormal wear and tear of joints, which could lead to arthritis.
- Reducing stress on the ligaments, which hold your joints and spine together.
- Preventing the spine from becoming fixed into positions that are abnormal.
- Preventing issues of strain and overuse, which can lead to aches, muscle pain and injury.

So what, then, is considered proper posture for both sitting and standing?

#### Correct Standing Position

Standing puts stress on your lower spine because when you're upright, your center of gravity and the weight of your torso shifts to the lower back. This can take a toll on people who, through work or otherwise, are required to stand for long stretches. Reduce this strain through better standing posture, as described here:

- Stand straight and tall, with your shoulders back.
- Keep your head level and in line with your body.
- Pull in your abdomen.
- Keep your feet at about the width of your shoulders.
- Keep your knees slightly bent.
- Keep most of your weight on the balls of your feet.
- Let your hands hang naturally at your sides.
- If you stand for a long time, shift your weight from your toes to your heels, or from one foot to the other.



#### Correct Sitting Posture

Statistics show that, on average, Americans spend most of their lives sitting — either at work or at home ... or both. Without proper posture, such long periods of sitting can take a real toll on your body and, especially, to the lower back. To prevent this, consider these posture tips:

- Adjust the height of your chair so your feet can rest flat on the floor and your knees sit evenly (if not slightly lower) than your hips.
- Don't cross your legs. Keep your ankles in the front, just below your knees.
- Use a chair that offers proper lumbar support, encouraging a slight inner curve in your lower back.
- Keep your head, neck and upper spine straight.
- Keep your shoulders comfortable and relaxed.
- If at a workstation, keep your desk, chair, keyboard and mouse in positions so your hands, wrists and forearms rest parallel to the floor.





"There is no single medicine that comes close to what physical activity can do... Regular physical activity benefits body and mind."

Conventional wisdom may suggest that if you're feeling pain in your back, the best thing to do would be to relax and rest until the pain subsides. But studies now show that's not necessarily the best course of action.

Research over the past decade, in fact, has shown that many people with back pain who remain active actually experience less pain while avoiding the side effects of immobility (i.e., muscle stiffness, decreased range of motion, etc).

Those who are able to keep moving through spells of back pain have also been shown to dwell less on the pain, avoiding the anxiety and slight depression that can come with such an ailment.

Is a little rest going to make your back worse? Of course not. But when you're dealing with back pain, too much rest can actually exacerbate the condition.

Instead, you may be better off taking regular walks.

#### Walk Away the Back Pain

Studies have shown that walking is a simple and effective way to prevent, alleviate and even treat back pain.

Yes, by simply walking two to three times a week — at 20 to 40 minutes a clip — is enough to keep your back healthy and to relieve both pain and soreness in the spine. It works because active walking causes abdominal and back muscles to work in much the same way they do with other exercises meant to target these particular areas. But, walking requires with no special equipment or supervision.

#### Benefits of a Walking Regimen

No single medicine on the market today comes close to providing the wide range of benefits that physical activity offers. Exercise is good for both the body as well as the mind, and this includes the simple act of walking. For the prevention and treatment of back pain, walking offers the following:

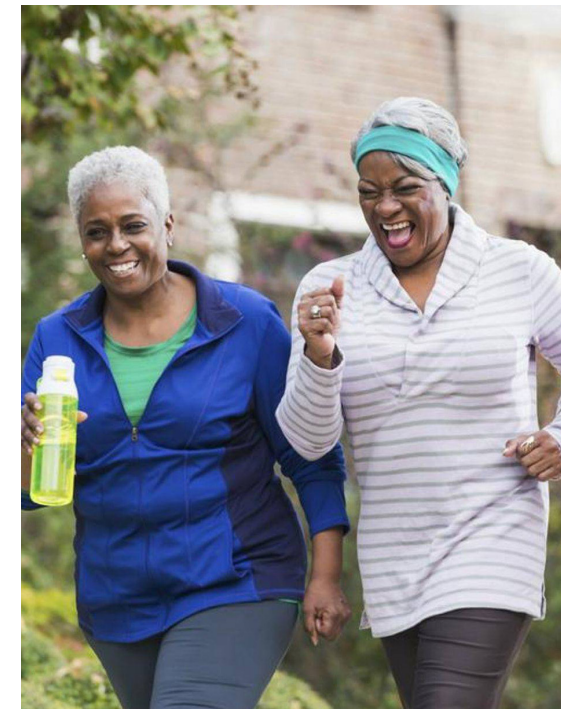
- **Stronger Muscles:** Stronger feet, legs, hips and core muscles will increase stability in the spine, keeping the body upright and balanced.
- **Healthier Spine:** Walking improves circulation throughout the body, allowing it to better hydrate and nourish the spine's soft tissues while washing away toxins.
- **Better Flexibility & Posture:** Along with regular stretching, walking helps increase the body's range of motion. The promotion of better movement can lead to injury prevention.

#### Exercise for Back Pain

There's an exercise for nearly anyone who's experiencing back pain. In addition to walking, other exercises that may provide relief for your back include:

- Cycling (real or stationary)
- Low-impact aerobics
- Swimming and water-based exercises
- Tai chi
- Yoga
- Stretching

If your back pain makes it unbearable to do these or other activities, see your physician or a physical therapist.



# 4

## STRETCH & IMPROVE FLEXIBILITY.



Stretching is one of the simplest and more effective [and natural] back pain treatments available.

Stretching is one of the simplest and more effective [and natural] back pain treatments available — an at-home treatment that nearly everyone can do.

By working to relax tight muscles while increasing circulation for improved spinal nourishment, stretching can help loosen the muscle tightness associated with back pain.

Studies support a stretching regimen for the treatment of back pain. Research also supports stretching as a solution for the prevention of back pain, a consideration that, moving beyond today's discomfort, can keep people from missing work and important moments in their lives.

### Things to Avoid

When you have back pain, one of the worst stretches you can do is bending over to touch your toes. This stretch requires a higher level of balance and alignment support than many with back weakness and discomfort can provide.

Also when stretching, move slowly and deliberately. Avoid bouncing or the use of weights when stretching through back pain.

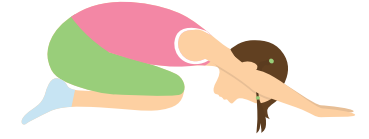
### It's Not Just the Back

Not all stretches that can benefit the spine are meant to stretch the back specifically. Tightness in the hamstrings and/or the hips, for instance, can lead to unnecessary pressure on the lower back, so these other areas may often be the target of beneficial stretching regimens.

On the next page are five stretches that can help relieve and prevent back pain:

### 1. Child Pose

This stretch helps relax the muscles in the lower back. Start on all fours and sit your hips back as you slowly reach your arms forward. Stop and hold as you feel a slight stretch in your back.

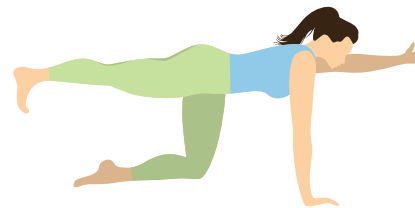


### 2. Hamstring Stretch

The backs of our legs [the hamstrings] tend to get tight as we do a lot of sitting, causing some pull on the lower back. To stretch, lie on your back and, one at a time, slowly pull one knee to your chest. Hold [while the other leg remains straight], then repeat with the other leg.

### 3. Cat-Camel Stretch

Stretch the spine while also strengthening the back. While on all fours, arch your back to the sky and hold. Then, lower back to the floor and hold. Repeat 10 times.



### 4. Bird Dog

The goal of this exercise is to strengthen the core and stability in the spine. On your hands and knees, extend one leg back as you point the opposite arm forward. Hold for a few seconds, then do the same on the other side. Repeat several times.

### 5. Lower Back/Trunk Rotation

Help relax the muscles along the sides of your trunk with a lower-back rotation. From a seated position, raise your left knee toward your chest, then twist to the left using your right elbow to slowly control the turn. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, then repeat on the other side. Repeat 5 times.



# 5

## SEE A PHYSICAL THERAPIST!



## Why should you **Get PT First?**

Study after study has shown that those with back pain who seek out physical therapy early during their treatment journeys reap a ton of important benefits, including:

- A significantly reduced probability of requiring expensive and invasive tests and treatments [i.e., MRIs, surgery].
- An 89 percent less likelihood of receiving a prescription for painkillers/opioids.
- An average of a 60 percent reduction in likely medical costs related to back pain treatments.
- A 25 to 40 percent reduction in the likelihood of experiencing repeated low-back pain.

Why so many benefits? Well, a physical therapist is a highly educated, licensed health care professional whose goal is to help patients reduce pain, restore mobility and prevent future injury.

For back pain sufferers, this includes not just treating the pain, but uncovering the source of the pain or injury. Once identified, a physical therapist will devise an individualized plan that addresses the weaknesses and/or imbalances causing the pain, all with an eye toward preventing future flare-ups.

**Call us today to schedule a FREE back pain consultation with our physical therapy team!**