

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and health care specialists at Cook, Hall & Hyde, Inc.

Back Pain: Prevention and Relief

Completely preventing back pain is optimal. However, if you cannot completely avoid it, learning how to relieve your back pain is the next best option.

Tips for Prevention

- *Lift safely* – Use your legs, bend your knees, tighten your abdominal muscles and keep the object being lifted close to your body.
- *Avoid twisting* – Pay close attention to how you are moving your spine, and scale back on twisting according to the warning signs your body gives you.
- *Drink water* – Drinking plenty of water enhances the height of intervertebral discs, enhancing their ability to be shock absorbers for your body.
- *Live actively* – Exercise and activity keeps spinal muscles strong. The most important muscles to strengthen to avoid back pain are the abdominals.
- *Stretch* – Incorporate stretching into your fitness program to avoid stiffness and stay flexible. Stiff muscles are a precursor to injury.
- *Maintain a healthy weight* – Being at a healthy weight helps avoid compression and loading of the intervertebral discs in your back which can lead to posture abnormalities.

- *Sleep well* – Finding a comfortable sleeping position helps avoid placing unnecessary strain on the back and neck.
- *Warm-up and cool-down* – Warming up with 5 to 10 minutes of light aerobic activity helps prepare your muscles for exercise; cooling down after a workout helps relieve muscle tightness, maintain balance and alignment, and relieve joint strain.
- *Stand up* – Sitting too much loads the spine and compresses the discs in your back, leading to disc issues.
- *Wear good shoes* – Flat shoes or shoes with heels one inch or lower are best for your back.
- *Go holistic* – Body work techniques such as massage therapy, yoga, Pilates, chiropractic or acupuncture are great ways to keep the structures of the spine tuned.

Tips for Relief

- *Heating pads* can help to relax painful muscle spasms. Use heat for 20 to 30 minutes at a time. Ice packs and massages can also provide relief.
- *Nonprescription medications* like aspirin, acetaminophen, naproxen, ketoprofen and ibuprofen help reduce pain and swelling.
- Seek medical attention if you begin to experience back pain extending down your leg and below the knee; numbness in your leg, foot, groin or rectal area; or fever, nausea, vomiting, stomachache, weakness and sweating.



Did you know...?

Although the causes of back pain are usually physical, emotional stress can also play a role in how severe pain is and how long it lasts. Stress can affect the body in many ways, including causing back muscles to become tense and painful.