



LOWER BACK PAIN: HOW EXERCISE HELPS

You may feel like resting, but moving is good for your back. Exercises for lower back pain can strengthen back, stomach, and leg muscles. They help support your spine, relieving back pain. Always ask your health care professional before doing any exercise for back pain. Depending on the cause and intensity of your pain, some exercises may not be recommended and can be harmful.

Exercise is good for low back pain -- but not all exercises are beneficial. Any mild discomfort felt at the start of these exercises should disappear as muscles become stronger. But if pain is more than mild and lasts more than 15 minutes during exercise, patients should stop exercising and contact a doctor. Some exercises may aggravate pain.

LIFTING WEIGHTS MAY HELP

Done properly, lifting weights doesn't usually hurt your back. In fact, it may help relieve chronic back pain. But when you have acute (sudden) back pain, putting extra stress on back muscles and ligaments could raise risk of further injury. Ask your doctor or fitness professional whether you should lift weights, and which exercises to avoid

AEROBIC EXERCISE

Aerobic exercise strengthens your lungs, heart, and blood vessels and can help you lose weight. Walking, swimming, and biking may all help reduce back pain. Start with short sessions and build up over time. If your back is hurting, try swimming, where the water supports your body. Avoid any strokes that twist your body.

SCIATIC NERVE PAIN



Sciatic nerves go from your lower back into your legs. When something presses on them, like a slipped disk or a bone spur, you get sciatica. You might have a burning sensation, numbness, weakness, or pain. Some people say it feels like pins and needles, while others say it's more like getting an electrical shock or being stabbed with a knife. However, it feels to you, there are many ways to get relief.

KEEP MOVING/STRETCH

If your pain isn't too severe, it's a good idea to stretch, go for short walks, and do any other physical activities that you feel up to. It's especially important to try to stretch your lower back, since that's where something may be pinching your sciatic nerve.

HEAT THINGS UP OR COOL THEM DOWN

Hot and cold may be opposites, but both can help keep you comfortable. Cold treatment is usually best for an injury that just happened. After about 72 hours, doctors usually suggest switching to heat. Use an ice pack that's wrapped in a towel or try a heating pad for about 15-20 minutes at a time. Be careful not to burn your skin.

GET A MASSAGE/FOAM ROLL

A professional rubdown isn't just about relaxation. Research shows that massage therapy eases pain and improves how well you can move your lower back. It also helps get blood flowing, which encourages your body to heal itself. Find a therapist who specializes in back pain and can also work some assisted stretching into your session. You could also try foam rolling which is kind of like massaging yourself!

Back pain

HEALTH
HUB

BAD HABITS FOR YOUR BACK

SIT HUNCHED

Do it too much, and it can flatten the natural curve of your spine and damage the cushioned disks between the bones. This can lead to early arthritis and other problems. Gently stretch and move your head and neck in all 4 directions every half hour. To ease any pain or spasm, try applying an ice pack or heating pad to the area. Be sure to cover the skin with a light towel or cloth first. See your doctor if the pain won't go away.

TOO MANY TREATS

Choosing the wrong foods too often can lead to inflammation and leave out nutrients you need to be strong. Your body needs lean protein, whole grains, fruits and veggies, and healthy fats like those from avocado and salmon to build strong muscles, bones, and soft tissue in your back. Be sure to get nutrients like calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D, too.

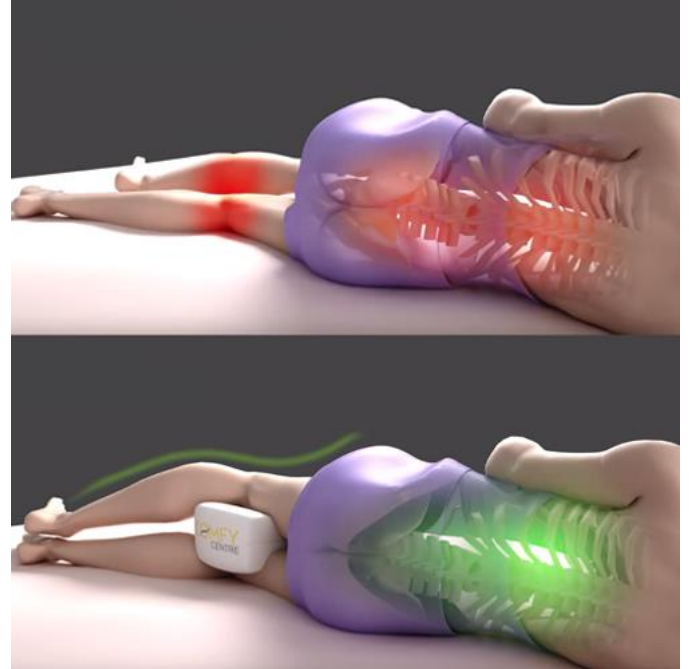
SIT TOO LONG

It stresses your back muscles, neck, and spine. Slouching makes it worse. Sit straight in a chair that supports your back, and set the height so your feet rest naturally on the floor. But no matter how comfortable you get; your back won't like sitting for long stretches. Get up and move around for a couple of minutes every half hour to give your body a break.

SMOKE

Do it, and you're 3 times more likely to get lower back pain. It can curb blood flow, including to your spine. That can make the cushioning disks between your bones break down quicker. It also can weaken bones and give you osteoporosis, and it can slow healing. Even coughs from smoking can cause back pain. If you smoke, make quitting your top health priority and ask your doctor for help.

HOW SHOULD YOU SLEEP?



Side sleepers seem to have the most luck avoiding back pain. Slip a pillow between your legs to take pressure off your hips and lower back, and tuck your legs slightly toward your chest. This position can be especially comfortable for people who already have back pain and for pregnant women.