

THE

CONNECTION

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What Is Back Pain

We've all experienced back problems from time to time. The pain in the lower back. In fact, back problems are the most common physical complaints among American adults. Back pain is a leading cause of lost job time -- to say nothing of the time and money spent in search of relief. Back pain includes sore muscles and tendons, herniated discs, fractures, and other problems.

What Causes It?

Back pain ranks high on the list of self-inflicted ailments. Most of our back troubles happen because of bad habits, generally developed over a long period of time. These include:

Poor posture

Overexertion in work and play

Sitting incorrectly at the desk or at the steering wheel

Pushing, pulling, and lifting things carelessly

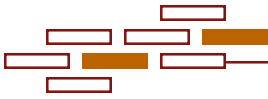
Sometimes the effects are immediate, but in many cases back problems develop over time. One of the more common types of back pain comes from straining the bands of muscles surrounding the spine. Although such strains can occur anywhere along the spine, they happen most often in the curve of the lower back. The next most common place is at the base of the neck.

Whether the muscle strain is from lifting heavy objects or from something as innocuous as a sneeze makes little difference - the pain can be agonizing.

No More Back Strains and Sprains

Lifting things is a big part of the work we do around here. We do it so often that it's easy to forget that there is a right way and a wrong way to lift things. Do it the wrong way and you may get away with it 50 to 100 times. But sooner or later you could become an instant invalid. Lower back injury - the most common work related injury - can cause you lifelong pain and disability. Let's go over the steps for preventing back injury.

- ★ Before you begin lifting, wear gloves if you're handling rough equipment. And if you wear safety shoes, you can focus your mind on the load, not on your unprotected toes.
- ★ Get a good grip and good footing. Position your feet so that one foot is next to the load and one behind it.
- ★ Get under the load by bending your knees, not your back. This is the single most important thing to remember about lifting.
- ★ Use your hands, not your fingers, to grip the load. Keep the load close to your body.
- ★ Never twist your body when lifting. Turn your whole body by using your feet.
- ★ But before you lift anything, how heavy is that load? Studies show that only 10 percent of male industrial workers can lift over 70 pounds safely. Most men shouldn't lift more than 37 pounds and most women shouldn't lift more than 28 pounds. Just because you can lift it doesn't mean you should lift it. Get someone to help you with heavy loads. It's a great way to make friends.
- ★ If you do experience back pain, pay attention to it. You will recover from simple strains or sprains by giving yourself a rest. Stay away from heavy lifting until the injury heals. Lifting with an injured back can lead to severe back problems.
- ★ If heavy lifting is part of your job or if you strain your back often, do yourself a favor and get into good physical shape with a conditioning program that includes aerobics, weight training, and stretching exercises. Some workers find it helpful to wear back braces when on the job lifting is necessary.
- ★ Back injuries affect fully half of the nation's work force during their working lives. Follow the directions we've gone over here and you can be sure of keeping yourself in the injury free half.



SUNBURN SOLUTIONS

If you get a sunburn, try these self-help tips.

Take a cool shower or bath, or apply cool compresses to the burned area.

If you have mild blistering, leave blisters intact to speed healing and avoid infection. If they burst, apply an antibacterial ointment on the open areas and cover with a sterile gauze bandage.

Apply over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream or aloe vera lotion several times a day if the skin is intact.

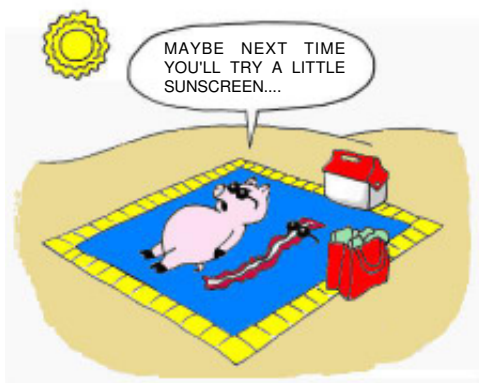
Take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others) or acetaminophen (Tylenol, others).

If your sunburn includes severe blistering or if you experience immediate complications such as rash, itching, dizziness or fever, consult your doctor.

To Prevent Sunburn

Use sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.

Wear protective clothing.



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IS YOUR WALK WORKING OUT?

Once you can walk a few miles with ease, you may be looking for ways to step up your walking program. Try these ideas.

Speed Walk

Time yourself during a typical walk, then try to beat your time. Pumping your arms vigorously can help quicken your pace. Gradually work your way up to about 4.5 to 5 m.p.h..

Get Vertical

Climb hills or stairs to increase your cardiovascular endurance while really working your abdominal, buttock, lower back and leg muscles.

Go Long

Train for a long distance walking event, such as a half marathon. If you're currently walking two to three miles during your workouts, give yourself 12 to 24 weeks to prepare for the longer course by gradually increasing your mileage each week.

Interval train

In a single workout, alternate between changes to your traditional walk. A 30-minute workout may look like this, with five minutes given to each portion: Walk normally, then increase your pace. Walk normally, then walk while swinging your arms.

Add Time

If you're walking 30 minutes a day, add five minutes every few days until you build up to 60 minutes.

Get into the Splash

Since water adds both resistance and buoyancy, walk in waist-deep water to intensify your workout while taking it easy on your joints.

Incorporate Jogging into Your Routine

If walking is no longer a challenge, try alternating walking with jogging one or two days a week. For instance, walk one minute, then jog the next minute, and so forth. It's best not to jog more than four times a week to minimize joint and muscle strain.

Use Walking Poles

Similar to ski poles, walking or trekking poles exercise your arms and burn an average of 45 more calories during a 30-minute workout.