

FIGHT BACK AGAINST BACK PAIN

Tips to help prevent back pain.



1. Exercise regularly

Regular, low-impact exercise increases balance and strength. It also helps keep your back and abdominal muscles strong. Always talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Your doctor may recommend one or more of the following.^{1,2}

- › **Strength training:** Work in back-strengthening and stretching exercises at least two days a week.
- › **Balance exercises:** Tai chi or yoga can help increase your balance.
- › **Aerobic exercise:** Fast-walking and swimming are good examples of low-impact, aerobic activities that get your heart pumping and keep your heart rate up while you're exercising. Try getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as brisk walking) a week. You can even do 10 minutes at a time.

Be sure to warm up to help your muscles transition from cold to warm, and help prevent injury.

2. Eat a healthy diet

Yes, what you eat can affect the health of your spine. So, fill your plate with plenty of veggies, fruits, whole grains and lean proteins. In particular, calcium and Vitamin D can help keep your bones strong and prevent osteoporosis, which can lead to bone fractures that cause back pain.²



Calcium is found in dairy products (milk, cheese and yogurt), green leafy vegetables such as kale and collard greens, tofu, and calcium-fortified products such as orange juice, soy milk and cereals.

Vitamin D is made in your skin through the absorption of sunlight. You can also get this important nutrient from foods such as salmon, tuna, eggs, cheese and fortified dairy products, orange juice and cereals.

Together, all the way.®



3. Reach and maintain a healthy weight

Staying at a healthy weight lowers your risk of back pain.² It can help reduce the stress and strain on your back.



4. Practice good posture when seated, standing and sleeping²

- › Good posture can help prevent back pain.
- › Try not to slouch when standing and sitting.
- › Sit up straight with your back against the back of your chair and your feet flat on the floor. If possible, keep your knees slightly higher than your hips.
- › Stand tall with your head up and shoulders back.
- › If you can, switch between standing and sitting so you aren't in the same position for too long.
- › If you're a side sleeper, place a pillow between your knees.³
- › If you sleep on your back, place a pillow under your knees.³

5. Avoid heavy lifting or learn good form to protect your back²

- › Lift things with your legs, not your back.
- › Keep your back straight and bend at your knees or hips.
- › Get help if the load is too heavy for you to lift alone.

6. Relieve stress

Get some exercise, socialize, go to a movie or try meditating to help you relieve tension and shrug off the stresses of every day.



7. Quit smoking⁴

Smoking reduces the blood flow and nutrients to the lower back. It also slows healing. Talk with your doctor about ways to quit.



Sources:

1. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. "What is back pain?" <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/back-pain> (last reviewed July 2019).
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Prevent Back Pain." <https://healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/prevent-back-pain> (last updated January 30, 2019).
3. WebMD. "Sleeping Well With Low Back Pain." <https://www.webmd.com/back-pain/sleep-and-back-pain#2> (last reviewed May 16, 2019).
4. Mayo Clinic. "Back pain: Overview." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/back-pain/symptoms-causes/syc-20369906> (August 4, 2018).

This is general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice prior to undertaking a new diet or exercise program.

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