

Tips & Tricks to Prevent Back Pain:

**ADVICE FOR HOW TO GET
RID OF BACK PAIN NOW
AND LATER**

INTRODUCTION

Since four out of five of us are going to suffer from back pain at one time or another, according to numerous studies, it only makes sense to learn how you can cope with the pain as well as prevent it from happening in the first place.

Though there are some cases of back pain that you can't control – accidents, traumas, pregnancy, etc. – most cases of back pain are related to the way we move and interact with the world around us.

So, if we change the way we move, we can reduce our chances of being sidelined by back pain. Here are some helpful tips that can both help you prevent back pain from being a problem, while also helping you reduce back pain if you've already begun to feel a twinge.

NOTE: If you are currently suffering from back pain and any of these tips make the pain worse, stop what you are doing and check with your doctor for further guidance.

STAND UP STRAIGHT

While most of us realize that we should be correcting our posture more, it's an essential step in preventing and reducing back pain.

Our spines are meant to be in a naturally curved position, but we need to hold our bodies in a certain manner in order to allow the body to sit in this proper position.

When you slouch, the vertebrae in your spine have more pressure put on them, causing pain and possible spinal damage when you continue to slouch throughout your life.

Here is how you can begin to stand up straight:

- Stand with your feet slightly apart, about hip's distance is comfortable for most people.
- Hold your head up high with your gaze forward.

- Pull your chin up so that it is parallel with the floor.
- Roll your shoulders slightly back.
- Keep a slight bend in your knees, softening them.
- Put your arms to your sides, with palms facing inward.
- Bring your chest up, as though you were taking a deep breath.

You should be able to draw a line from your ear to the shoulder to your hip to your knee if you are standing up properly.

But the immediate effect will be that your body should feel more relaxed and your neck and back should loosen up.

You can also use these tips when you are sitting down, though your feet should be flat on the floor and knees bent at a ninety degree angle from your chair.

The more you practice this good posture, the more natural it will become

HEAD TO THE GYM

Since your back and neck are supported by the muscles in your body, it only makes sense that the stronger those muscles are, the more likely they will support your body and prevent back and neck pain.

To support your lower back, you will want to focus on abdominal training. A simple abdominal workout should include exercises for each of the major muscle groups:

UPPER ABS – BASIC CRUNCHES

- Lay on your back with your hands crossed on your chest.
- Place your feet flat on the floor with your knees bent.
- Slowly lift your chest up toward the ceiling, keeping your chin pointed to the ceiling.

- Lift a few inches from the ground, hold for a second and then lower slowly to the ground.

LOWER ABS – REVERSE CRUNCHES

- Lay on your back your arms at your sides
- Lift your legs up with your knees bent and feet off the floor
- Focusing on your lower abs, lift your buttocks off the floor slowly, keeping the rest of your body in place
- Slowly lower down

OBLIQUE MUSCLES – SIDE CRUNCHES

- Lay on your right side with your knees bent
- Support your head with your right arm and bring the left hand to your head
- Crunch toward your legs with the left leg, using the left elbow to guide the movement, lower down.
- Switch sides

You can repeat these exercises daily or every other day to help increase your abdominal strength and thus reduce your back pain.

THE MORE WALKING THE BETTER

One of the best exercises for a healthy back and neck is to get outside and walk more.

Because our bodies fall into a more natural posture when we walk, this will help you strengthen your entire body and allow for better support of any weaker muscles in your core.

Try walking the recommended 10,000 steps a day by purchasing a pedometer and charting your progress. The more active you are, the more strength you are providing to your back – and those are all steps in the right direction.

WHEN LIFTING AND MOVING HEAVY OBJECTS...

Many of us have hurt our backs when we were lifting or moving something that was heavier than our muscles were accustomed to. We inadvertently strained our muscles, which can take a long time to heal if the injury was severe enough.

But there are ways we can prevent these kinds of injuries in the future:

- Always lift with your knees – Instead of thinking of lifting things with your arms and your upper body, focus on your knees and legs when you lift something heavy. The larger muscles in your lower body can more easily adapt to heavier weights.
- Be sure to push instead of pull – If you have to move something that's heavy, be sure to push the object (if you can) instead of pull it. Because pushing uses more lower body strength, you will reduce the stress on your back and neck.
- Hold in your abdominals – Whenever you are lifting or moving something, be sure to pull in your abdominal muscles to protect your back. It will help if you take in a deep breath as you do so.
- Get help – Instead of lifting something that you shouldn't be lifting, maybe you should ask a friend to help you lighten the weight on your back and your body.
- Avoid twisting as you lift – When lifting something heavy, be sure to move up and down in a straight line. This will help you protect the smaller muscles and ligaments in your back.
- Hold the object close you – Instead of holding something far away, be sure to hold the item closer to your body, it helps to create a healthier balance.
- Never lift anything above shoulder level – You aren't as balanced at this height and you can cause a lot of damage to your back.

As you decide that you need to move something heavier, you need to create a plan for how you will move it BEFORE you start to lift. This will help you

plan for any troubles and decide whether you need to enlist more help than you might have on hand.

TRY DRINKING MORE WATER

Though the benefits of water have been touted for everything from weight loss to boosting your immune system, water can also help you prevent back pain.

Because the muscles of the body require water in order to function at their highest capacity, you need to make sure you are preventing dehydration from happening.

But the amount of water you need will vary from person to person. Those who are larger in size and who have more muscles will require more water to function properly. Those who are smaller will not need as much water in their bodies.

There are a few easy ways to tell if you are drinking enough water:

- You aren't thirsty
- Your lips aren't dry or chapped
- Your urine is a pale yellow
- You are urinating every two hours

You can drink plain water to help boost your hydration, but you can also choose from the many caffeine free drinks that are available too – juices, decaffeinated coffee, etc.

Certain foods also contain a large amount of water (watermelon, cucumbers, and corn), so these will also count toward your levels of hydration.

YOGA CAN HELP

It seems like everyone has tried yoga at one point or another, but can it really help you with back pain?

Here are a few simple postures that you can try at home to help you reduce your current back pain as well as to prevent it from coming back:

- Sit in a chair with your feet on the ground, looking forward. Slowly turn your upper body to one side, using your hands on the side of the chair or the arm rest to guide the movement. The movement should be small and your lower body should not move. Switch sides.
- Lay down with your legs up in the air and against the wall. If this puts too much pressure on your back, you can place a rolled up yoga mat or towel under your lower back for support. Raise your arms over your head and on the floor behind you.
- Lay on the floor with your head supported by towels, your palms up and your shoulder blades flat on the ground. Close your eyes and relax your muscles, allowing your legs to fall apart and your hips to turn outward.
- Sit with your legs out in front of you, legs together. Try to reach up to the ceiling and then down to your toes to provide a deep stretch in your lower back and hips. Slowly bring your self back up to sitting by tightening your abdominal muscles.

There are a number of helpful yoga DVDs and classes available to help you learn the basics of this ancient practice. By helping you focus your breathing and strengthening your core, you can increase the pain free days in your life.

FOOT MASSAGE TRICKS

Acupressure and massage are often used to help those with back and neck pain, but even foot massage can help you reduce your pain as well.

Reflexology techniques work on the idea that certain points of the body are related to other parts of the body. The system uses maps that pinpoint areas that you can press in order to release tension in other parts of the body – like the back.

At the end of the day, try some of these techniques for preventing back pain:

- Take one foot in your hand and push along the inner part of the big toenail bed. The other hand should be supporting the big toe as you do this to stabilize the movement. Rotate your finger on this area in a clockwise pattern a few times and then the opposite direction a few times. Switch feet and repeat.
- Move down the foot to the joint of the big toe and rub the outside of this joint in small circles. Switch feet.
- Move toward the outside of the foot where the little toe is and pinch the skin between the bottom of the foot and the bottom of the little toe. Push into this area in a circular motion, switch directions and then switch feet.

These techniques are for helping back pain once it's already started:

- Have someone hold onto your foot's heel and then have them push alongside the bottom of your foot where your big toe joint starts in the arch of your feet. Hold pressure in this area as you move your finger (or you have them move their finger) in a circular motion.
- Push a thumb into the center of the bottom of the foot, beneath the toes and where the arch begins. Hold the pressure there and move in a circular motion.
- Lift up the toes of the foot as your other hand uses its thumb to push into the center of the heel. Hold this position for a minute.

AROMATHERAPY

If you're looking for natural remedies for back and neck pain, there are plenty of treatments to choose from. Aromatherapy is one of the more popular ones, as it's not only effective, but also quite pleasant to incorporate into your life.

In order to create these aromatherapy blends, you will need to find essential oils. These can be ordered through online venues or from health care retailers in your area.

Some easy aromatherapy recipes techniques to use include:

FOR WHEN THE PAIN IS REALLY BAD

4 drops chamomile essential oil
4 drops rosemary essential oil
4 drops ginger essential oil
14 drops lavender essential oil
½ ounce carrier oil - like almond, olive, or sesame

This will help to soothe the muscles and help them to release tension that may be built up. Simply mix these oils together and apply to the skin. If you should find that your skin is irritated in any way, simply add more of your chosen carrier oil to further dilute the essential oils.

FOR MODERATE PAIN

2 drops chamomile essential oil
2 drops birch essential oil
2 drops eucalyptus essential oil
2 drops black pepper essential oil
2 drops lavender essential oil
½ ounce of carrier oil

When put onto the skin when the pain first starts, this concoction can often help to prevent pain from becoming too intolerable.

The main concern with most cases of back pain is that you are simply too tense and you need something to calm you down so that your muscles don't tighten.

To deal with tension, try adding some of these essential oils or simply the fragrances to your life. For example, you can add a few drops of the oils to your favorite lotions or dot the diluted oils onto your wrists to smell whenever the pain occurs.

- Lavender oil
- Eucalyptus
- Rosemary
- Clary sage

Choose an essential oil that suits you and makes you feel calmer. Try burning incense or lighting scented candles to further enhance the effects of this therapy.

STRETCHING

Of course, if your back and neck pain stem from muscular tension, you will want to make sure you are stretching yourself out as much as possible. To reap the most benefits from this practice, you will need to stretch on a daily basis, preferably several times throughout the day.

- Touching your toes – Since the hamstrings are generally the tightest part of the body because of our sedentary lifestyles, it's no wonder that they contribute to lower back pain. To help release this tightness, try reaching for your toes as often as you can. Try not to keep the knees straight, but rather try to keep them soft so that you're not hurting yourself in the process.
- If you can't touch your toes – Place a chair in front of you and lean forward until your arms rest on the chair. This still helps to loosen your back, but prevents you from reaching too far and overstraining yourself. This is a good place to start when you already have back pain.
- Side reaches – When you are sitting or standing, try to reach your arms up over your head and slightly lean to the side without turning your body. The key is that you shouldn't change your gaze, so keep your head forward. This helps the rest of your body stay forward too.

REDUCE THE STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

Many more doctors feel that back and neck pain are actually caused by the stress that you have in your life, rather than injuries or other traumas. So, if you can reduce the stress in your life, you will reduce the incidence of back pain.

Here are some helpful tips to begin to reduce your stress:

- **Create 'me' time**
Too often, we over-schedule ourselves and never have a free moment to spare for ourselves. This is unhealthy and it can also add to your stress levels. Instead, try to carve out at least ten minutes of 'me' time each day where you're only responsible for yourself and what you want to do.
- **Establish boundaries**
With cell phones and the internet, it's harder than ever to escape from work. But in order to keep stress at bay, you need to be able to turn off your work life and turn on your relaxation. Create clear boundaries as to when your work day begins and when it ends. Try not to do any work outside of those times and tell others that you will not work outside of those times.
- **Ask for help**
When we're really stressed, we tend to knuckle down and not ask for help, thinking it makes us look weak to ask. But in the end, this lack of help makes us resentful and possibly even more stressed than we need to be. Ask for help when you need it. People like to help, but only you can tell them when it's necessary.
- **Take time away**
About 75% of working adults today aren't taking their vacation time from work. Be sure to take this time to get away from the office and unwind. Travel with friends or family and learn how to decompress.
- **Vent your frustrations**
Instead of bottling up your stress, write down everything that bugs you during the day and then throw away or burn that piece of paper before you go to bed. That will signify that you are done being frustrated and you can relax.

CONCLUSION

No matter how often you have back pain – you shouldn't have to suffer for it.

With these tips and tricks, you should be able to reduce the pain in your life as well as deal with the pain once it's already here. While prevention is certainly the route to strive for, dealing with back pain may be your first priority right now.

Though you might not be able to avoid back pain, you can certainly react in a positive way – and not take it lying down.