

## TAKE PAINS TO PREVENT BACK PAIN

In the United States, the majority of adults will experience back pain at one time or another. Acute back pain generally lasts between several days and several weeks, while chronic back pain generally persists for at least three months. **Symptoms of back pain may include muscle ache; shooting pain; limited flexibility; inability to stand straight; and pain that radiates down the leg.**

### CAUSES AND PREVENTION

Back pain is often caused by improper lifting, strained muscles and ligaments, or a quick, awkward movement. Additional causes include structural problems such as sciatica or ruptured disk; skeletal irregularities; and osteoporosis. Rarely, more serious conditions such as an infection in the spine can be responsible for the pain. According to the Mayo Clinic, by taking the following steps, you may succeed in preventing or minimizing back pain.

- Engage in regular low-impact aerobic activities that do not jolt or strain your back. Walking and swimming are good choices.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight strains your back muscles and leads to pain.
- Build muscle strength and flexibility. Abdominal and back strengthening exercises help condition muscles to provide support for the back.
- Quit smoking. Smokers have diminished oxygen levels in their spinal tissues, which can hinder the healing process.

### USE APPROPRIATE BODY MECHANICS

**Standing**—When standing for a long period, relieve your low back by placing one foot at a time on a stool.

**Sitting**—Sit with knees and hips level in a seat with arm rests and good lower back support.

**Lifting**—To lift properly: lift with the legs; bend at the knees while maintaining a straight back; hold the load close to the body; and do not lift and twist at the same time.

### TREATMENT

If back pain does not improve after 72 hours, see your physician. He or she can determine the cause of the pain, and if necessary, order tests, prescribe medication or physical therapy, and in some cases, recommend surgery. Consult a physician as soon as possible if back pain is accompanied by fever or unexplained weight loss; causes numbness or weakness in one or both legs; is constant or intense; or follows a fall or other injury.

**IF YOU EXPERIENCE BACK PAIN, CONSULT A PHYSICIAN FOR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OPTIONS.**

# HAVE LOWER BACK PAIN?

The American Medical Association estimates that **four out of five adults** will experience significant low back pain during their lifetime. The cause of back pain is frequently misuse or overuse of the back.

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