

# body

# mind

Your Monthly Guide to Good Health <sup>SM</sup>

## TAKE CAUTION » AND PUT AN END TO BACK PAIN «

In the United States, back pain is a common complaint, affecting four out of five people at least once during their lives, according to the Mayo Clinic. Risk factors for back pain include obesity, smoking, depression, and a sedentary lifestyle. Fortunately, many cases of back pain are preventable or treatable. Sometimes, however, surgery is necessary to restore proper function.

### CAUSES

Often, back pain is caused by strained muscles and ligaments; improper lifting techniques; and after an uncomfortable or quick, clumsy movement. Back pain is also caused frequently by ruptured or bulging disks, the cartilage-like cushions between the vertebrae of the spine. Other causes include arthritis, osteoporosis, and skeletal irregularities, such as an abnormal curve in the spine.

### PREVENT THE PAIN

Practicing appropriate body mechanics and achieving or maintaining a healthy physical condition can go a long way toward preventing back pain. Consider the following suggestions:

- » While sitting, keep knees and hips level.
- » While standing for long periods, relieve your back by placing one foot at a time on a stool.
- » 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.
- » Engage in regular low-impact exercise, such as walking, and swimming.
- » Participate in core-strengthening exercise to build muscle flexibility and strength.
- » Stop smoking—smoking causes decreased oxygen levels in spinal tissue. For help quitting smoking, talk to your physician.
- » Achieve or maintain a healthy weight to avoid putting additional strain on the back muscles.

### ADDITIONAL SYMPTOMS

Rarely, back pain indicates a serious medical issue. Consult a physician immediately if back pain is accompanied by fever or unexplained weight loss; causes bladder or bowel problems; causes weakness or numbness in one or both legs; or follows a fall or other injury.

**If you experience back pain, consult a physician for diagnosis and treatment options.**



©2011 The Health Information Center. "Body + Mind" and "Personal Health Guide" are published by, and are the property of, Augsburg, Minneapolis, MN. Copyright 2008 by Augsburg. All rights reserved. No editorial content is to be included in a publication by the office of a medical professional. Consult your physician about all health-related matters. Comments and suggestions regarding these publications may be directed to Augsburg, 800 North State, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

Executive Offices: Henry Ross, President & Chief Executive Officer / Stacy Peterson, Vice President, Information Technology / Jan Christophel, Vice President, Finance & Administration  
Creative Services: Zapata, & Design Group—Leo Burnett Creative Director / Barbara Wilson, Editor / Jessica Smith, Production Manager/Designer



The Health Information Center products are now printed on 50% Recycled paper with 25% Post Consumer Fiber. Our paper is FSC certified. By choosing a product with the FSC label, we are supporting the growth of responsible forest management worldwide. Proudly printed in the USA.

225

## KEEP YOUR BACK ON TRACK

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.

For tips on keeping your back healthy and strong, call Pam Coleman, Employer Relations Manager, at 803-395-2527.

+rmc  
the Regional Medical Center