

FACT SHEET: Lower Back Pain

Prevention and Treatment



Low back discomfort is extremely common and usually involves muscle spasm of the supportive muscles along the spine. Symptoms may range from muscle ache to shooting/stabbing pain, limited flexibility, and/or loss of muscle function. If left untreated, the injury can become more serious. Prevention of lower back pain is extremely important, as symptoms can reoccur on more than one occasion. Using correct body mechanics while doing any task plays a large role in preventing lower back pain and a re-injury. Knowing how to treat lower back pain is also key in preventing long term discomfort and recurrence.

✓ NEED TO KNOW:

1. Practice good body mechanics by keeping your elbows close to your side.
2. Maintain neutral posture whenever possible.
3. If you have a lower back injury, don't ignore it. Treat it right away.
4. Do preventive exercises to keep the core strong and prevent recurrence.

PROPER BODY MECHANICS AND WORK HABITS:

- **Keep elbows in:** Avoid long reaches. Keep objects and tasks close to you (bring the task closer or step closer to it). Keep all tasks at forearm length.
- **Lift safe:** When lifting from floor or lower surface, bend at the hips and knees, keeping your back as straight as possible. This will allow more work to be performed by the strong leg muscles, instead of the back muscles. See **Figure 1**.
- **Pivot:** Avoid twisting back. Instead Pivot around using the feet movements. The feet should follow the direction of the shoulders.
- **Push,** don't pull. Pushing is preferable to pulling. Keep the back in proper alignment and use leg muscle to do the work. Push with both hands.
- **Posture:** Maintain good posture while sitting and standing. Correct alignment of the spine means avoiding slouching with a rounded back. Poor posture means the spine is not in its normal "S" shaped curves causing unbalanced stresses to muscles and ligaments.

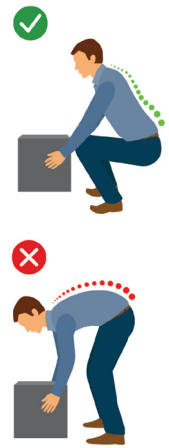


Figure 1

! TREATMENT FOR LOWER BACK DISCOMFORT:

- **Rest:** Avoid prolonged sitting, driving, bending, heavy lifting and twisting.
- **Ice:** Ice applied to lower back for 15 minutes every 1-2 hours helps to reduce pain and spasm. Avoid using heat for the first 48 hours of an acute injury.
- **Medication:** Your doctor may prescribe NSAIDs anti-inflammatory medication (e.g., Aspirin, Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen or Naproxen Sodium).
- **Exercise:** Gentle exercise for mobility and stretching (especially muscles of legs and back) can help decrease severity, duration and recurrence of low back pain. Do not perform exercises that increase pain.
- **Positioning:** Modifying your sleeping position can help ease strain to your lower back. Ensure your bed is firm enough to give you adequate support and use a small pillow for you head. If you sleep on your back, try putting a pillow under your knees. If you prefer to sleep on your side, put a pillow between your thighs and another pillow under your arm to support your upper body.

📱 MORE INFO:



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- NIH: [Low Back Pain](#)
- Cleveland Clinic: [Back Strains and Sprains](#)
- OSHA: [Back Disorders and Injuries](#)
- OrthoInfo: [Preventing Back Pain at Work and at Home](#)