



Pain Specialists of Charleston, P.A.

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26 Back Pain Tips from Your Doctor

The staff at Pain Specialists of Charleston is committed to providing our patients the very best care possible. After years of experience and countless medical resources, our team has compiled a list of helpful pain tips. These tips come from physicians, physical therapists, nurses, and even back pain patients.

Please note: Some of these tips may seem contradictory - like using heat or ice - but every patient is different and their response to certain treatments may vary. We encourage our patients to try some of the following tips and discover what works best for them!

Pain Remedies

1. **Numb it.** After activity-related discomfort, ice acts as local anesthetic by numbing the tissue, and reducing inflammation - both of which are usually factors in low back pain. Make your own ice pack by freezing dish soap in a plastic bag. You may also try freezing water in a paper cup and giving yourself an ice massage.
2. **Warm it up.** Heat helps blood circulate in the affected area of the low back, and blood brings healing nutrients. Some prefer moist heat - a hot bath or other form of moist heat.
3. **Keep it warm.** Some people feel more pain relief with continuous, low level heat, which is available with commercial heat wraps (e.g. ThermaCare, and ACE).
4. **Combine acetaminophen and ibuprofen.** These have different mechanisms of action, and when combined, are more effective than either one alone.
5. **Take the max dose.** If you're taking over the counter medications like Tylenol or ibuprofen, take the maximum dose to keep a therapeutic level of the medication in your bloodstream.
6. **Use your brain.** Employ powerful relaxation and distraction techniques in order to make your brain ignore at least some of the pain signals it receives and help you feel more in control of your situation.
7. **Get a massage.** A good massage loosens up the muscles and gets blood circulation flowing.

General Health

8. **Get continuous sleep.** Lack of deep, restorative sleep makes the pain worse yet pain makes it hard to sleep. If you need it, get professional help for sleep aids.
9. **Stop smoking.** It causes back pain.
10. **Avoid alcohol.** It is a depressant and interrupts sleep cycles.
11. **Check your gene pool.** Certain types of back pain are genetic - so if back pain runs in your family, take extra care of your back.
12. **Stretch your hammies.** Tight hamstring muscles put stress on the lower back. Stretch them every morning and evening.
13. **Stay active.** Don't rest for more than a day or two when back pain is at its worst. Prolonged inactivity makes the pain worse.

Exercise

14. **Walk as much as possible.** Carry a pedometer to know you're walking 10,000 steps a day. A treadmill has less impact on the spine than walking on a sidewalk.
15. **Try an elliptical trainer.** The tracks never touch the ground, so there is almost no impact on the spine.
16. **Go biking.** For people who feel better leaning forward, try an upright exercise bike. For those who feel better reclining, try a recumbent bike (with a lumbar back support).
17. **Water therapy is a gentle treatment.** Water provides buoyancy and mild resistance while exercising. Most importantly, water provides no impact or stress on the back.
18. **Strengthen your core.** Support your spine with targeted abdominal and back muscle strengthening exercises.
19. **Try a strengthening program.** Consider programs that focus on strengthening the core trunk muscles: McKenzie therapy, Dynamic lumbar stabilization exercises, most forms of exercise ball programs, tai chi, Pilates or yoga!

Posture and Ergonomics

20. **Look at your chair.** Make sure the back of the chair supports the inward curve of your lower back, your chest is open, arm on armrests, upper back is straight and your feet are flat on the floor.
21. **Use a lumbar support.** (or a rolled towel) for your office chair and car.
22. **Don't slouch.** Ever. It stresses the back.
23. **Replace your office chair.** With an exercise ball. Sitting on the ball introduces an element of instability, and over time the muscles used to balance on the ball become stronger.
24. **Pivot with your feet.** Don't twist while lifting. Instead, pivot with your feet to keep your low back from twisting.
25. **Use pillows.** Reduce stress on your spine by using pillows around your back and body while you sleep. Try lying on your side, in the fetal position, with a pillow between your knees.
26. **Push.** If you have to move a heavy object, always push – don't pull.

Questions? Our dedicated staff is here to help. Call us at (843) 818-1181 or visit our website.

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