Back Pain
Preventing and Relieving
Back Pain

What To Do When Back Pain Starts

- Lie down with your back on a flat surface. Place a pillow under your knees and head in either of the two positions shown to the right.
- These positions take pressure and weight off your back.
- Try to walk around very slowly for a few minutes every hour.
- See a doctor to discuss what is causing the pain and if you should perform the activities listed on this handout.

How to Treat Back Pain

What can I do for ongoing back pain?

- Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight puts pressure on your back.
- Stay active. Try exercises such as walking or swimming.

What can I do for short-term relief?

- Use heat pads or ice packs for 20-30 minutes at a time on the area that hurts.
- Relax in a hot shower or bath.

When To Call Your Doctor

- Your pain goes down your leg.
- Your leg, foot, groin or buttocks is numb.
- You have fever, nausea, vomiting or weakness.
- Your pain is so bad you can't move.
- Your pain does not go down after 2 weeks.
- Your pain was caused by an injury.
- You lose control of your urine or stool.

Preventing Back Strain

- **Lifting:** Bend your knees and hips, squat, and lift with your legs muscles. Do not lift by bending your back.
- **Moving heavy objects:** Push rather than pull.
- **Sitting:** Sit upright and not slouched. Get up and stretch.
- **Walking:** Don’t hold yourself stiffly. Your arms should swing. Don’t hang your head down unless you need to look down at something.
- **Shoes:** Wear flat shoes or shoes with low heels (1 inch or lower) with arch support.
- **Standing for long periods of time:** Rest 1 foot on a low stool to relieve pressure on your lower back. Every 5 to 10 minutes switch the foot you're resting on the stool.
It is important to keep your back muscles flexible. Your back muscles can help you maintain good posture. Do not do any exercises that cause pain.

Gently Stretch Back Muscles:

1) Lie on your back with your knees bent and slowly raise your left knee toward your chest so that you feel a light stretch.
2) Very gently press your lower back toward the floor.
3) Hold for 3-5 seconds.
4) Relax and repeat the exercise with your right knee.
5) Do 10 of these exercises for each leg.

Low Back Release:

1) Sit in a chair with feet on the floor hip width apart.
2) Place your palms on your legs as you bend forward, until your belly rests on your thighs. Hang your head and arms down loosely.
3) If your belly cannot rest on your thighs, instead rest your hands and elbows on your legs for support.

Pelvic Tilt for Low Back Mobility:

1) Lie on your back with your knees bent; the bottoms of your feet should be on the floor hip width apart.
2) Gently press your low back to the floor by letting your belly and ribs sink and slightly tilting your pelvis, so your tailbone comes slightly away from the floor.
3) Hold for 3-5 seconds and then release. Repeat several times.

Back Strengthening Exercise:

1) Lay with your belly on the floor and your arms at your sides.
2) Slowly lift your head and let your upper chest come away from the floor. Only do what is comfortable.
3) Hold for 3-5 seconds and then release. Repeat several times.

Hip Flexor Stretch:

1) Step into a lunge with your front leg bent, making sure that your front knee is directly over your ankle.
2) Place your hands on either side of your front foot. Keep your back leg bent with your knee on the floor.
3) You will feel a stretch as you lean forward.
4) Hold for 3-5 seconds. Repeat several times for each leg.