

# FIGHT BACK AGAINST BACK PAIN

Six tips to help prevent back pain.

## 1. Exercise regularly

Frequent exercise increases balance and strength. It also helps keep your back and abdominal muscles strong. Always talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Your doctor may recommend one or more of the following:<sup>1</sup>

- › **Strength training:** Work in weight-bearing exercises at least twice a week.
- › **Balance exercises:** Tai chi or yoga can help increase your balance.
- › **Aerobic exercise:** Fast-walking and swimming are good examples of low-impact, aerobic activities that get your heart pumping and keep your heart rate up while you're exercising. Try getting at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week. You can even do 10 minutes at a time.<sup>2</sup>

Be sure to warm up and cool down to help your muscles transition from cold to warm, and help prevent injury.

## 2. Eat a healthy diet

Yes, what you eat can affect the health of your spine. So, fill your plate with plenty of veggies, fruits, whole grains and lean proteins. In particular, calcium and Vitamin D can help prevent osteoporosis, which can lead to bone fractures that cause back pain.<sup>1</sup>



**Calcium** is found in dairy products, green leafy vegetables and fortified products like orange juice.

**Vitamin D** is made in your skin through the absorption of sunlight. You can also get this important nutrient from foods like salmon, eggs, milk and fortified cereals.

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### 3. Reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Doing so can reduce the strain on your lower back, especially if you tend to gain weight around your midsection.



### 4. Practice good posture when seated, standing and sleeping

- › Stand up straight and don't slouch. Balance your weight evenly on your feet.
- › Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- › Choose a chair that supports your spinal curves and adjust the height so your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- › If you sit for long periods, get up, stretch and move around frequently.
- › If you're a side sleeper, place a pillow between your knees.<sup>3</sup>
- › If you sleep on your back, place a pillow under your knees.<sup>3</sup>

### 5. Avoid heavy lifting or learn good form to protect your back

- › Get as close as possible to the item you'll be lifting
- › Don't bend over the item. Lift it by putting the stress on your legs and hips.
- › Keep the item as close to your body as you can when standing up
- › Pivot with your shoulders, hips and feet in the direction you need to place the item – do not twist the spine while holding a heavy load
- › If you can't pick up the object, consider having someone help you lift it. Also, consider pushing the object – this is often easier on your back than pulling a heavy load

### 6. Relieve stress

Get some exercise, socialize, go to a movie or try meditating to help you relieve tension and shrug off the stresses of every day.



#### Sources:

1. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. "Handout on Health: Back Pain." March 2015. [http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Back\\_Pain/default.asp#5](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Back_Pain/default.asp#5) (accessed June 9, 2016)
2. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. "Back pain: Definition." June 17, 2015. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/back-pain/basics/definition/con-20020797> (accessed June 9, 2016)
3. WebMD. "Sleeping Well With Low Back Pain". <http://www.webmd.com/back-pain/living-with-low-back-pain-11/sleep-and-back-pain> (accessed June 9, 2016).

This is intended to be general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice prior to undertaking a new diet or exercise program.

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