

## Treating Your Own Back

Staying in bed for more than a few days can make you stiff and cause supporting back muscles to become weaker; some movement is necessary to heal properly. Get active as soon as you can. Begin aerobic exercises as soon as you can. Aerobic exercise will increase blood flow and promote healing. Examples include walking, swimming, and the elliptical machine. Use the exercises in this booklet to help your back and abdomen.

### Transverse Abdominus Activation

Lay on your back with your knees and hips flexed and your spine in a neutral position. Place your fingertips on your abdominal muscles just inside your flat pelvic bones. Draw your belly button down towards your lower back without moving your spine. You should feel the muscles contract and lower with your fingertips. Hold x 10 seconds while breathing normally. Repeat 6-10 times and perform frequently throughout the day in various body positions.



### Bridge

Lay on your back with your hips and knees bent. Keep your spine straight and the abdominals lightly contracted. Contract the gluteal muscles and raise the hips until the front of the abdomen, pelvis, and the thigh are in line. Return slowly. A good pace is 10 seconds to contract and 2 seconds to relax or return to the starting position. Repeat 6-10 times and perform frequently throughout the day.



### Single leg Extension in Prone

Lie on your stomach. Tighten the muscles in one leg and raise it from the floor. Hold your leg up for a count of 5 and return it to the floor. Do the same with the other leg. Goal: 2 sets x 1 minute of sustained performance



### Single arm and leg raises

Balance equally on all fours with a straight spine and the abdominal muscles drawn in and braced. Without shifting the spine or pelvis raise one arm and the opposite leg. Pause in this position and then slowly lower your arm and leg. Alternate lifting the opposite arm and leg. If you have difficulty keeping your balance in this position, modify the exercise by performing only the leg or arm raises separately. Goal: 2 sets x 1 minute of sustained performance



### Planks and Side Planks

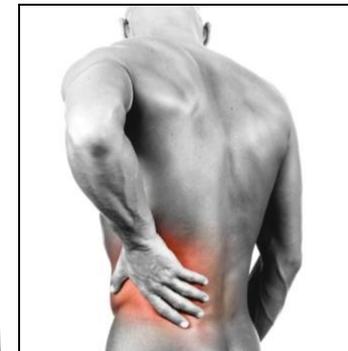
Make sure that you keep your body in a straight line. Keep your abs pulled in to stop your back from arching.



IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS,  
PLEASE CONTACT THE PHYSICAL THERAPY  
CLINIC AT  
362-5555 / 701-747-5555

319th MDG

## Managing Your Back Pain



Physical Therapy Clinic—362-5555

## Managing Low Back Pain

If you have low back pain, you are not alone. Nearly everyone at some point has back pain that interferes with work, routine daily activities, or fun. Back pain is one of the most common physical complaints. Fortunately, most low back pain goes away within a few days. Every now and then, it lasts a bit longer, up to 4 or 6 weeks. Most of the time, low back pain can be managed with self care.

## What Causes Low Back Pain

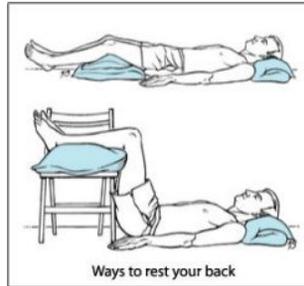
The exact cause of low back pain can be hard to pinpoint at times. Maybe you helped your neighbor move and used your back more than you are used to. Or possibly you moved something the wrong way. Maybe you stood or sat too long in one position so now the muscles are stiff and sore.

## Looking for relief?

The best position for relief when your back hurts is to lie on your back on the floor with pillows under your knees, with your hips and knees bent and your feet on a chair, or just with your hips and knees bent. This takes the pressure and weight off your back.

You may need 1 to 2 days of this sort of rest for a hurt back. Resting longer than

this can cause your muscles to weaken, which can slow your recovery. Even if it hurts, walk around for a few minutes every hour.



Heating pads can help to relax painful muscle spasms. Use heat for 20 to 30 minutes at a time. Ice packs and massages may also give relief.

## KEEP YOUR BACK HEALTHY!

### *Sitting*

Sit in chairs with straight backs or low-back support. Keep your knees a little higher than your hips. Adjust the seat or use a low stool to prop your feet on. Turn by moving your whole body rather than by twisting at your waist.

When driving, sit straight and move the seat forward. This helps you not lean forward to reach the controls. You may want to put a small pillow or rolled towel behind your lower back if you must drive or sit for a long time.

### *Sleeping*

The best way to sleep is on your side with your knees bent. You may put a pillow under your head to support your neck. You may also put a pillow between your knees.

If you sleep on your back, put pillows under your knees and a small pillow under your lower back. Don't sleep on your stomach unless you put a pillow under your hips.

Use a firm mattress. If your mattress is too soft, use a board of 1/2-inch plywood under the mattress to add support.

### *Lifting*

When lifting a heavy object, keep the back straight. Keep the feet apart to help you balance. Bend with knees, not the waist. Bend your knees, keeping your feet flat on the ground. Your knees should not extend beyond your toes. You can lean forward slightly as long as you keep the back straight, not curved. (Bend at the hips, not the waist) Hold the object close to the body.

Lift slowly. If you can't lift slowly the object is too heavy for you and you should not be lifting it. Though lifting with the legs prevents injury to the back, you may strain your knees joints when lifting an object too heavy for you. Ask for help. If you need to turn move your feet, do not twist your back.

**Did You Know ?**



**Reducing your stress level, losing weight and quitting tobacco use can also help reduce back pain?**