

Contact Your Doctor If...

If you experience the following symptoms you should see a doctor immediately

- ◆ Loss of Control of the Bowel or Bladder
- ◆ Sudden Muscle Weakness in a Leg or Arm.
- ◆ Tingling, Burning or Numbness that Radiates into the Arm or Leg
- ◆ An Increase or No Improvement in Pain after Three Days.

Physical Therapy

If symptoms continue, then physical therapy treatment is recommended. A physical therapist can help teach you **Therapeutic exercises** to improve the flexibility and strength of the muscles to prevent future strain. **Educate** you on proper techniques for lifting and other **body mechanics** to prevent re-injury. Use **Massage** to decrease adhesions that may occur in the muscles, and increase blood flow to improve the health of the surrounding tissues. Other modalities such as **ultrasound, iontophoresis, and electrical stimulation** may be used to help decrease inflammation and promote healing.



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Treating A Back Strain



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Back Strain

Four out of five people will experience back pain during their lifetime. There are many causes of back pain and each case must be treated individually.

This brochure will discuss how to manage your back pain when it is caused by a strain or sprain to the muscles and ligaments of the back. A back strain may range from a pulled muscle to actual tearing of the muscle fibers or ligaments.

The causes range from repetitive movement such as repeated forward bending and lifting with your back to a trauma such as a car accident.

Most back strains get better on their own. Follow the simple steps outlined in this brochure to learn how to decrease your pain and prevent it in the future.

What To Do First

- ◆ Stop and Rest
- ◆ Find A Position of Comfort
- ◆ Ice
- ◆ Back Support
- ◆ Pain Medication

Position of Comfort

The initial approach to treating a back strain is to support and protect the muscles. Finding a position of comfort will take pressure off the spine. A reclined position has the least pressure. It may be one of the following positions depending on your injury.

- ◆ ***On Your Back*** with a pillow under your knees
- ◆ ***On Your Side*** with a pillow between your legs
- ◆ ***On Your Stomach*** with a pillow under your stomach

You should NEVER stay in bed for more than 2 days. Research has shown this delays the healing of the muscle.

Ice

Ice helps reduce inflammation therefore it should be used during the first 24-48 hrs. It should not be used longer than 20 min. at a time. It is most effective if used on the back for 15 minutes every 2 hours.

Keep in mind that ice may tighten up the muscles initially, but this is only temporary. Heat may eventually be used to relax the muscles, but not until the inflammation has improved.

Back Support

Using a back support during the initial stages of injury will provide relief and support to the fatigued muscles of the back. If you are unable to obtain a back support during the first few days after the injury, you can use a weight training belt, an undergarment such as a girdle, or a 6-8 inch wide ace wrap secured around and compressing the irritated muscles.

Pain Medication

Although you should always consult your doctor before taking any medication, the following medication has been found to help reduce and decrease pain associated with muscle strain.

- ◆ Aspirin
- ◆ NSAID's (Nonsteroidal Antinflammatory Drugs) such as Ibuprophen found in Advil and Motrin