



Move To Feel Good



TIPS FOR YOUR BACK



Back pain occurs most often in the lower back, where our bodies absorb the most weight and stress. About 50% of working age adults have lower back problems. An acute lower back problem is defined as having lower back or back-related leg symptoms for less than three months. But 90% of people experiencing this issue are back to normal within a month, with or without medical treatment. Connect with resources provided below by clicking the text highlighted in [blue](#).*

Causes of Back Pain

Back pain can be sharp, dull, acute, or chronic. It can be felt on one or both sides of the back. Common [causes](#) include:

- Strained muscles in the lower back
- Sprained ligaments that support the spine
- Muscle strain
- Poor posture
- Degenerative disease
- Tumors



You Should See a Medical Provider When...

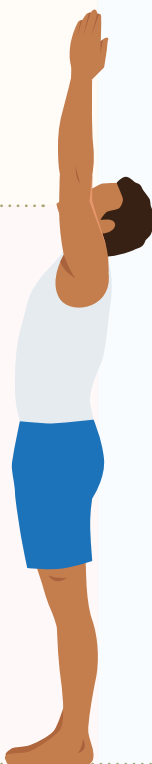
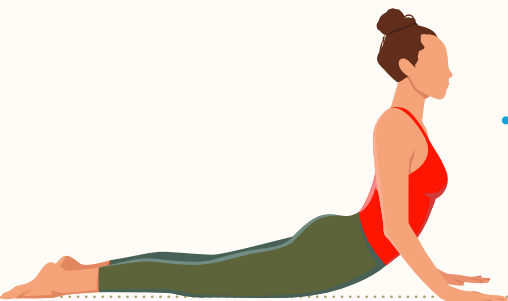
- Your range of motion is limited.
- You're in significant pain.
- You believe you're having a medical emergency.
- Your pain persists, worsens, or returns after getting better.



Strength Training Exercises for Your Back

- [Pelvic Tilts](#) strengthen the abdominal and back muscles. Hold this exercise for a count of five and repeat five times.

- [Cobra Exercises](#) also work both your abdominal and back muscles, and they require no equipment.
- Click [here](#) for additional back exercises. Use the [Experience](#) and [Equipment](#) dropdown menus to refine your choices.



Stretches for Your Back

- [Knee-to-Chest Stretches](#) help to limber up a stiff back.
- [Spinal Stretches](#) help to increase the flexibility of the spinal column:
 - Stand erect and raise both hands over your head.
 - Stretch towards the ceiling, focusing on your upper body. Use your arms, hands, and fingers to reach upward as though you're being pulled from above.
 - Hold for a count of five.

Tip: Keep your feet flat on the floor.

Using Heat and Ice to Alleviate Back Pain

[Ice massage](#) is typically used within 48 hours following an injury. Watch this [video](#) to create your own ice massage applicator and follow these five steps:

- Apply the ice gently and massage in a circular motion.
- Focus the ice massage therapy on the six-inch area of the back where the pain is felt.
- Avoid applying the ice massage directly over the bones of the spine.
- Limit the ice massage therapy to about five minutes at a time to avoid an ice burn.
- Repeat the ice massage two to five times a day.



After 48 hours, it is best to switch to [heat therapy](#).

The exact duration for heat application depends on the type and/or magnitude of the injury. Short durations, about 15 to 20 minutes, will suffice for minor back tension, while longer durations up to 30 minutes may be recommended for chronic conditions or severe pain. There are many heat therapy products you can purchase, or you can [create your own](#).



Ergonomic Tips

When You Walk or Stand

- When standing for long periods, prop one foot up.
- Shift your weight from one foot to the other.
- When standing and walking, keep all [three curves](#) of the back balanced, and the ears, shoulders, and hips aligned.
- Wear low-heeled, comfortable shoes.
- Use proper posture: Head high, chin tucked, and toes straight ahead.

When You Drive

- Keep your knees level with your hips. Adjust the car seat forward, if you need to.
- Sit up straight and keep both hands on the wheel.
- Use a lumbar support or rolled towel for lower back support.

When You Lift Things

- Wear good shoes (not sandals) with low heels.
- Stand close to the object.
- Plant your feet squarely, shoulder width apart.
- Bend at the knees, not at the waist. As you lift, slowly straighten your knees.
- Hold the object close to your body.
- Lift slowly. Let your legs carry the weight.
- Get help or use a dolly to move something that is too big or very heavy.



Workshop/Resources:

My Healthy Vermont's free [Chronic Pain Management Workshop](#) provides guidance and support to build strength, increase energy and mobility, and manage ongoing or long-term pain. It also addresses related issues like trouble sleeping or depression.

Source: Adapted from the American Institute for Preventive Medicine, *Back Care, What You Need to Know*.

The information provided is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified medical healthcare professional prior to starting any new program or treatment, or with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

*By clicking on the links in this page, you may be directed to third-party sites. These links are provided for informational purposes only.



Questions?

Email BeWell@bcbsvt.com or click [here](#) for more information.



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