

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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Treating and Preventing Back Pain

Guidelines for Back Pain Treatment

- Get medical attention immediately for a severe back injury like a fall, or if a fever accompanies your back pain. If an individual experiences loss of strength or numbness in their legs, or if they have loss of bladder or bowel control, they should seek immediate medical attention.
- Try at-home treatment for a week or two before consulting a physician for mild to moderate episodes of back pain. If symptoms appear to be worsening, contact a physician immediately.
- Following muscle strain in the back, it is recommended that individuals rest, **but for no more than two or three days.**
- If possible, take over-the-counter painkillers.
- Cold packs applied to the painful area for five to ten minutes at a time are helpful within the first 48 hours after injury. After the initial period, a heating pad, a warm whirlpool bath or hot shower may provide temporary relief.
- Start your normal activities and careful exercise as soon as possible.

Preventing Back Injuries

Preventing back pain may be more effective and beneficial than treating it. Back specialists offer several suggestions for preventing back injuries and back pain:

- **Don't Smoke.** Studies show that individuals with severe back pain were more likely to be heavy smokers. Smoking reduces blood flow to the discs, possibly causing them to degenerate.
- **Lift properly.** The farther you hold or carry an object away from your body, the greater the potential for back injury. Bend from your knees and keep objects close to your body when lifting.
- **Don't sit for long periods.** Stand up at intervals, like when talking on the phone. When driving long distances, periodically stop and walk around. On an airplane, walk the aisles.
- **Use a stable chair.** Your chair should have armrests, and anti-slide surface and back support. When sitting in a chair, your knees should be slightly above the level of your hips.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Carrying extra body weight, particularly in abdominal region, can throw the body off balance, resulting in poor posture, adding extra stress on the back.
- **Exercise regularly.** Muscles of the back, in combination with spinal ligaments, provide the foundation of strength and support for the entire spinal column. Exercise increases the strength and efficiency of muscles in the trunk and lower back. With exercise, the back is better able to withstand sudden movements and improper bending or lifting. Choose low-impact exercises (walking, stair climbing, cycling, etc.) which develop the back, trunk and leg muscles without jarring the spine.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.