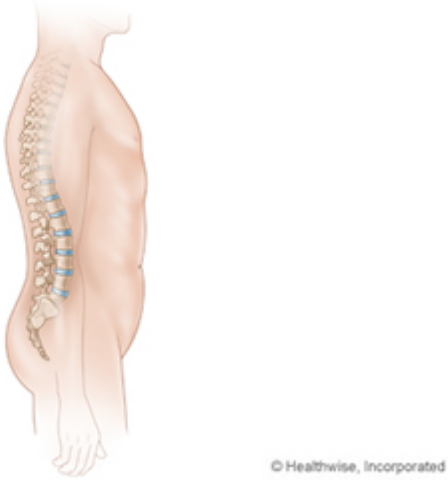
Back Strain: Care Instructions



Overview

A back strain happens when you overstretch, or pull, a muscle in your back. You may hurt your back in an accident or when you exercise or lift something. Sometimes you may not know how you hurt your back.

Most back strains will get better with time. You can take care of yourself at home to help your back heal.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Try to stay as active as you can, but stop or reduce any activity that causes pain.
- You can try using heat or ice to see if that helps.
    - Try using a heating pad on a low or medium setting for 15 to 20 minutes every 2 or 3 hours. Try a warm shower in place of one session with the heating pad. You can also buy single-use heat wraps that last up to 8 hours.
    - You can also try an ice pack for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours. Put a thin cloth between the ice pack and your skin.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
    - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
    - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Try sleeping on your side with a pillow between your legs. Or put a pillow under your knees when you lie on your back. These measures can ease pain in your lower back.
- Return to your usual level of activity slowly.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You are unable to move a leg at all.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse symptoms in your legs, belly, or buttocks. Symptoms may include:
  - Numbness or tingling.
  - Weakness.
  - Pain.
- You lose bladder or bowel control.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have a fever, lose weight, or don't feel well.
- You are not getting better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **U095** in the search box to learn more about **"Back Strain: Care Instructions".**

©2006-2022 Healthwise, Incorporated.

This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.