Tips to Help Prevent & Treat Back Pain

Ways to help protect your back:

**Stretch**
Extend your muscles and spine every day, and avoid long hours of sitting.

**Exercise**
Keep active and incorporate yoga, which has been shown to ease moderate to severe back pain.¹

**Lift carefully**
Bend your knees before lifting heavy objects and keep your back straight.²

Ways to help treat back pain:

**Use ice, then heat**
Use ice first to help reduce swelling. After a few days, try heat to help alleviate stiffness.³

**Seek treatment**
Visit a chiropractor, physical therapist or licensed acupuncturist for recommended noninvasive treatments, such as spinal manipulation, exercise and acupuncture.³ ⁴

**Take medication**
Take over-the-counter pain relievers to help ease discomfort and inflammation, but avoid the use of opioids.³

**Limit invasive options**
Unless it is a medical emergency, spinal imaging and surgery should typically be used as a last resort.⁴

Certain "red-flag" symptoms, such as fever or loss of bladder and bowel control, may require immediate testing and intervention.⁵

95% of people with back pain recover within 12 weeks by using conservative care options such as physical therapy.⁶

20–40% of spinal surgeries are unsuccessful, resulting in “failed back surgery syndrome.”⁷

Some risks of spinal surgery may include:⁸
- Infections
- Blood clots
- Lung problems
- Chronic pain
- Spinal cord damage
- Paralysis

⁵ Harvard Medical School (2014), https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/when-is-back-surgery-the-right-choice
⁸ University of Maryland Medical Center (2003), https://www.umms.org/ummc/health-services/orthopedics/services/spine/patient-guides/complications-spine-surgery

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