



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Clarke & Company Benefits, LLC

Although the causes of back pain are usually physical, stress can also play a role in how severe pain is and how long it lasts.

## BACK PAIN: PREVENTION AND RELIEF

When you suffer from back pain, your ultimate goal is to eliminate it. However, if you cannot completely avoid it, learning how to relieve your back pain is the next best option.

### Tips for Prevention

The following tips can help prevent back pain:

- Lift safely—Use your legs, bend your knees, tighten your abdominal muscles and keep the object being lifted close to your body.
- Avoid twisting—Pay close attention to how you are moving your spine, and scale back on twisting according to the warning signs your body gives you.
- Drink water—Drinking plenty of water increases the height of intervertebral discs, enhancing their ability to be shock absorbers for your body.
- Be active—Exercise and activity keeps spinal muscles strong. The most important muscles to strengthen to avoid back pain are the abdominals.
- Stretch—Incorporate stretching into your fitness program to avoid stiffness and stay flexible. Stiff muscles are a precursor to injury.
- Maintain a healthy weight—Being at a healthy weight helps avoid compression and loading of the intervertebral discs in your back, which can lead to posture abnormalities.
- Sleep well—Finding a comfortable sleeping position helps avoid placing unnecessary strain on the back and neck.

- Warm-up and cool-down—Warming up with five to 10 minutes of light aerobic activity helps prepare your muscles for exercise. Cooling down after a workout helps relieve muscle tightness, maintain balance and alignment and relieve joint strain.
- Stand up—Sitting too much loads the spine and compresses the discs in your back, leading to disc issues.
- Wear good shoes—Flat shoes or shoes with heels one inch or lower are best for your back.
- Go holistic—Body work techniques such as massage therapy, yoga, Pilates, chiropractic or acupuncture are great ways to keep the structures of the spine tuned.

### Tips for Relief

The following tips can help relieve back pain:

- Heating pads can help to relax painful muscle spasms. Use heat for 20 to 30 minutes at a time. Ice packs and massages can also provide relief.
- Nonprescription medications like acetaminophen, aspirin, naproxen and ibuprofen help reduce pain and swelling.

Seek medical attention if you begin to experience back pain extending down your leg and below the knee, numbness in your leg, foot, groin or rectal area or fever, nausea, vomiting, stomachache, weakness and sweating.



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