



# ORTHOPÆDICS

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## Banish that aching back – in your living room

One should not underestimate the value of a healthy back. The low back, or lumbar spine, is important as it provides you with strength and mobility. The strength allows you to stand, walk and lift. Mobility allows movements such as twisting, turning or bending. As most of us know, back pain can interfere with recreational, work and everyday activities. In fact, 80% of all adults will suffer from significant lower back pain at sometime throughout their life. Second to the common cold, back pain is the most frequent reason for seeking care from a doctor and for loss-of-work time in adults under the age of 45.

Most cases of low back pain respond favorably to simple at-home treatment. Acute low back pain often resolves itself in a few days or weeks. Spine specialists and nurses at OAD Orthopaedics (OAD) provide the following guidelines as to what can be done or avoided should you “overdo it” and unfortunately, experience lower back pain.

### DO:

- Apply ice or heat for a maximum of 20 minutes per hour application time, for better muscle response.
- Use ice to reduce swelling and/or heat to reduce swelling and decrease muscle tightness.
- Get limited bed rest for 24 to 48 hours as prolonged bed rest can ultimately weaken muscles and promote stiffness.
- Decrease pressure on lower back muscles by lying on your back with a pillow placed under your knees.

When lying on your side, place a pillow between your knees.

- Resume your regular exercise program gradually, if symptoms improve after 48 hours. Physicians at OAD explain that light activity can, in fact, actually speed up healing and recovery.

### DON'T:

- Ever fall asleep while using a heating pad
- Apply ice or heat directly onto skin
- Sleep on your stomach

For additional pain relief, medications are available. Some confusion does exist regarding the types of pain relief medications and their usage. The most common pain relievers are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) and include Aleve, Advil, ibuprofen, motrin and aspirin.

These pain relievers are available without a prescription and should be taken as directed on the bottle and with food; however, OAD emphasizes the importance of consulting your physician should you have a history of stomach problems and/or take blood-thinning medications such as Coumadin or Plavix.

Most back pain sufferers will benefit from taking NSAIDS for 3 to 5 days or longer, should your personal physician deem it necessary. It must be stressed, though, that NSAIDS must not be combined and taken together since stomach irritation is likely to occur.





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As previously mentioned, most cases of acute back pain are resolved in a few days. However, a physician should be consulted if back pain persists after a few days of self-treatment or if your pain is accompanied by a fever, radiating pain, numbness, tingling and/or weakness in the legs, and/or bowel and/or bladder dysfunction.

### PREVENTION:

The physicians of OAD recommend the following measures for preventing episodes of low back pain:

- Regular exercise with a focus on strengthening abdominal and back muscles.
- Use proper lifting and moving techniques by lifting with your legs and positioning the object close to your body. GET HELP if an object is too heavy.
- Maintain your proper bodyweight. Being overweight puts extra strain on your back muscles.
- Quit smoking because nicotine decreases circulation to the back.

In conclusion, most back pain problems can be safely and effectively avoided or alleviated with the above guidelines/preventative measures. An effective long-term strategy for ensuring a healthy, pain-free back involves consistently following a prevention program of maintaining good back health. This article's information, however, should not replace evaluation by a physician for further diagnosis and medical recommendations if your back pain/symptoms continue or intensify.

*This article was submitted by OAD Orthopaedics' spine nurses, Carol Adams, R.N., Patricia Buckalew, R.N., Alane Eilers, R.N., Diane Mitsuka, R.N. and Nancy Tisdale, R.N. OAD's Spine Team includes board certified orthopaedic spine surgeons John Andreshak, M.D., Stephen Heim, M.D., Jerome Kolavo, M.D. and three physiatrists who are board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation, Beth Froese, M.D., Steven Mayer, M.D. and Mary Norek, M.D. The comprehensive spine team provides conservative/nonsurgical and surgical care and treatment for all back and neck problems, including sco-*

*liosis. Their expertise includes fusions; minimally invasive spine techniques; microsurgery; trigger point, joint, and epidural steroid injection therapies and management of musculoskeletal conditions. A multi-subspecialty orthopaedic practice with convenient locations in Warrenton, Wheaton, Carol Stream, Naperville, Bartlett and Winfield, OAD provides comprehensive orthopaedic care and services in areas of orthopaedics such as sports medicine; hand and upper extremity; joint replacement/reconstruction/revision, including minimally invasive and advanced arthroscopic procedures; spine and neck; foot and ankle/podiatry; physiatry; and workers' compensation/occupational health services. State-of-the-art facilities provide on-site diagnostic testing/ MRI, physical, occupational and specialized hand therapy services, in addition to industrial rehabilitation such as work hardening/conditioning programs and functional capacity evaluations. For appointments and information, call OAD at (630) 225-BONE (2663). Visit online at [www.OADortho.com](http://www.OADortho.com).*

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