



Pain: Back Pain?

Ask Your Doctor About These 10 Tried & True Tips

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Whenever you're experiencing symptoms of any kind, the first step is always to see a licensed physician with related expertise who can assess the source of your discomfort, and advise you of the safest and most appropriate medical and/or integrative response.

Once the problem is being addressed medically, you can support the healing process and reduce pain by reducing, releasing and preventing stress in every way you possibly can.

How is Stress-Reduction Beneficial in Relieving Back Pain?

Stress of any kind produces the human stress response in which muscles tighten and breathing becomes more shallow, draining vital energy and resources needed for healing injuries. Perhaps you've heard stories of, say, a 5' 2" mother suddenly lifting a car to save her baby. That's the "Fight or Flight" response of the central nervous system that occurs whenever stress, fear, anger or pain are present --in this case working *for* her. In this automatic reaction, pulse quickens, blood flow to the large muscle groups increases as if literally preparing to do battle ...or run for our lives! Respiration quickens and becomes shallow, as stress hormones release to help us do what we must in this perceived crisis. But when these resources are summoned unnecessarily and habitually, due to excessive stress levels, the "Emergency" signal sets in motion a mechanism that can tax our intricate systems. When we're in pain or under other stress, the practice of mindful relaxation and meditation are physiological self-regulators to counter the "Fight or Flight" response and release tension. When we enter a meditative state, muscles begin to relax, respiration and blood-flow slow, as adrenaline and cortisol levels shift. This clearing process allows the inner wisdom of the mind-body into awareness, often permitting some profound psychological and physiological healing to take place. While meditation, moderate exercise and other relaxation techniques may not necessarily cure, they are a powerful, drug-free complement to professional health care. Symptoms can often be substantially diminished, thereby greatly enriching the quality of life!

1. Listen to your body. As soon as it signals fatigue, stop. If you're bedridden, stretch gently only if your physician advises that. Whenever seated, get up at least every hour and move gently to avoid stiffness.
2. Ask your doctor or therapist about Arnica Gel. It doesn't smell or stain, and works wonders for some.
3. Barring allergy, some suggest Ginger tea can be used as an anti-inflammatory and Chamomile can be calming. Ask your doctor if you might talk with a master herbalist for other safe, drug-free possibilities.

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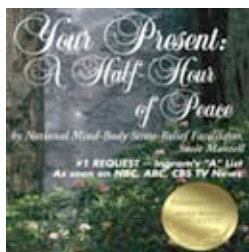


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4. Sometimes doctors prescribe anti-inflammatory medication, muscle relaxants or analgesics for excruciating episodes. When this is necessary, medication may facilitate healing and reduce acute pain for the short-term.
5. Get (gently) massaged and try some mind exercise in the pool when your health professional advise you're ready. Try reflexology. Lift nothing, and be careful about reaching as well.
6. Many back injuries occur as a result of improper body mechanics. Learn how to bend and sit and stand safely from a licensed physical therapist. A general rule of thumb for posture is alignment of ears over the shoulders, over hips, knees and feet with "neutral spine." Ask your health professional what sleep position is best for you, and for the safest way to lie down and arise safely.
7. Tightening the abs can support the low back. Ask your doctor if a McKenzie lumbar roll or a "squoshie" pillow might help to support a neutral spine when sitting.
8. Avoid sugar and "gassy" foods that can add pressure in the bowel, which can increase back discomfort. Drink plenty of water and less caffeine.
9. Moist heat relaxes muscles and ice cools inflammation. Ask which your physician or PT recommends.
10. Inhale slowly through the nose, deep into the belly thinking, "*I inhale deep, soft relaxation*" (then exhaling through the mouth) "*I release pain and all excess tension...*" Listen to a gentle relaxation CD or soothing music.

BONUS TIP: Do you know about Kinesiotape? Used in the Olympics, it has been amazingly helpful to many, but must be applied by a skilled professional. Ask your PT, DC, DO or MD about professionals who are certified to apply Kinesiotape if it's indicated for your problem. (*I have no vested interest, however I have benefited tremendously myself, so I thought I'd pass it on.*)

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END OF THIS TIP##