



First Aid for

LOW BACK PAIN

You may know someone whose back has “gone out.” It may even have happened to you. When you suddenly have pain in your lower back, it’s called acute back pain. This pain can be extreme, and it can be scary. The pain may make it hard for you to follow your regular routine. For example, you may not be able to put on your shoes or drive to work. The good news is that there are steps you can take immediately to help relieve the pain. And, in most cases, acute back pain will improve on its own when you take care of it properly.

Dos and Don'ts of Low Back Pain

When acute back pain strikes, follow the simple guidelines below:

The Dos:

- Do apply ice for 15 to 20 minutes every 2 hours.
- Do avoid movements that hurt, but move as much as you can.
- Do try an anti-inflammatory pain reliever. A pain reliever such as ibuprofen or naproxen may help relieve mild pain. It may also help decrease inflammation. Your doctor can tell you which anti-inflammatory medicine would be best for you.
- Do call your health care practitioner if your pain worsens or doesn't improve in the first 48 hours. Or call if you feel changes

such as numbness or muscle weakness.

- Do seek immediate medical care if:
 - » Your back pain is the result of a severe injury or fall
 - » You notice a loss of bowel or bladder control
 - » You have sudden severe loss of sensation or function in your lower body
 - » You have an unexplained fever with your back pain

The Don'ts:

- Don't apply heat for the first 48 hours.
- Don't bend, twist, or lift.
- Don't stay in bed or completely avoid all activity.

It may still seem scary to have a bout of acute low back pain. But these dos and don'ts can help you take care of yourself when you have acute back pain. Be sure to talk to your health care practitioner if you have any questions, notice any of the symptoms in the list above, or have repeated episodes of back pain.

Ask your health care practitioner if there are any tests, referrals, or treatments that might be helpful to use along with your current treatment plan. Other treatment options may include the following: chiropractic services, physical therapy, acupuncture, massage therapy, and medicines.