



Moderation - While couch potatoes are not doing their backs any favors, neither are those whose mantra is "no pain, no gain." Couch potatoes with a weak back are more likely to suffer back injury than those with strong, flexible backs. Don't suddenly leap off your couch and make a beeline for the nearest gym. Start slowly. Aerobic exercise is good, as long as you are willing to stop after ten minutes or so for the first couple of weeks to give your body a chance to adapt to the new routine. Walking is fundamentally one of the best exercises for the whole body. Incorporate stretching exercises into your routine as this is critical to injury prevention. Obesity is often a contributing factor to back pain as it adds stress to the back.

Workout Warning - Exercise is great in your 20s and 30s, but it's critical in your 40s and 50s. Exercise in your middle years so you can enjoy your older years. It's never too late to start.

Be Careful With Your Spine - The spine has been proven to be a hydraulic structure. The more you load it, the more it bursts at the seams. When you're young and strong, you have to be careful not to overload your spine, because, with backs, we pay dearly for our mistakes.

Learn to Lift - Improper lifting is the cause of most back injuries. Practicing good body mechanics is crucial. You want to lift with bent knees and only a partially bent back. Get close to the item, bend your knees not your back and keep the load close to your body. Follow the lifting rules whether you're carting grocery bags or moving paper boxes at work.

Sedentary Sufferers - If you often have a sore, tired back after being chained to your desk all day, you need to schedule time to work out or walk out the kinks. Allow some time for exercise during each day, whether you get up a little early, do it when you get home, or walk for a half hour during your lunch break.

Mattress Matters - Take some advice from Goldilocks and choose a mattress that's not too hard and not too soft. Find one that's just right. While your mattress should conform to your back and be comfortable, it should also provide a measure of support.

Stay Alert - We don't usually get hurt doing routine tasks. Many back injuries occur when we're doing uncommon tasks such as planting a tree, playing in the surf, or shoveling snow. Be deliberate in your actions when you're doing something out of the ordinary, when you're in a hurry or when you're tired. **Luckily, most back pain is self-limited. It hurts for a few hours, days or weeks and then goes away. But when it does act up here are some suggestions:**

Stop what you're doing - If your back starts to hurt while you're on the second hole golfing, don't even think about playing the entire 18! But don't wait too long to get back to activity.

Take aspirin or ibuprofen immediately - After an injury, unless medically restricted, take the smallest effective dose that will minimize side effects.

Ice, then heat - Ice first for 48 hours, then heat. Ice will help reduce the swelling and help relieve soreness. Follow with heat to relax muscle spasms. Apply either ice or heat for only five minutes at a time to avoid skin damage.

Massage - Gentle hand massage may provide relief by stretching tight muscles and ligaments.

Exercise - Unlike medication, which simply masks symptoms, exercise has a lasting effect, and makes the back more resistant to strain. It also improves blood supply to the back to improve healing of back injuries. It works for both treatment and prevention.

Adjust - When you are in pain, a few adjustments in your lifestyle can provide relief. Sit as little as possible, drive as little as possible, and avoid heavy lifting or pushing.

Relax! Try a home remedy version of biofeedback. Imagine a tranquil place and take a vacation in your mind. Listen to your favorite music or read a good book. You'll be surprised how much a few minutes of relaxation can help relieve back pain.

Thanks for your time. Let's work together to make Georgia a safer place to work.

