

Has your back been abusing you? Does your back hurt when you lift; or throb when you drive for long hours? Does it hurt to work and play? People tend to blame their backs for hindering their active lifestyle, but their lifestyle may be the cause for their back problems. Back problems can sneak up on you. When you're young and strong, you think you can lift anything; but years of lifting can take a toll on the spine. Some factors that contribute to back pain are: poor lifting techniques, over-exertion, posture, weight, lack of exercise, weak stomach muscles, injury, and age. There is help for many of these causes of pain and your back is probably trying to alert you to them. Assessing and modifying your lifestyle may assist in relieving symptoms of back pain.



Proper posture is necessary for a healthy back; poor posture will stress the back. Keep in mind not to slump while standing, sitting, or driving. If you take good care of a car, it will last you a long time before replacing it, but you will never be able to replace your back.

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 injuries than those with strong, flexible backs. Don't suddenly leap off your couch and make a beeline for the nearest gym. Start slowly. Walking is fundamentally one of the best exercises for the whole body. Incorporate stretching exercises into your daily routine as it is critical to injury prevention. Excess weight, especially in the stomach area, pulls the center of balance off and may cause stress on your 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. Strong stomach muscles are also needed to support the spine.

Be Careful With Your Spine – The spine is a hydraulic structure. The more you load it, the more it bursts at the seams.

Learn to Lift – Improper lifting is the cause of a 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 you need to lift; 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. Get help with heavy loads, use mechanical help when available.

Sedentary Sufferers – If you often have a sore, tired back after being chained to your desk all day, you need to schedule time each day to work out or walk out the kinks. Stand up occasionally to get the circulation back to the muscles.

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.

Be 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.



If it Hurts - Stop – 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.

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.

Relax! Imagine a tranquil place and take a vacation in your mind. Listen to your favorite music or read a good book. 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.