

Back Pain: 5 Ways to Take Care of Yourself

At some point, almost everyone has back pain.

But the pain affects every one of us differently.

What really hurts for one person may not bother another.

If you're like most people, when it hurts, you're willing to do whatever you can to feel better.

Here are five easy ways to take care of yourself when you have back pain.

One: Heat or ice. Heat can help, but some people prefer ice.

Try whatever works best for you.

Two: Keep moving as you normally would.

It may seem strange, but with back pain, moving is better than sitting around or lying down.

Three: Try nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or naproxen. NSAIDs seem to work best for back pain.

But if you can't take NSAIDs, you can try acetaminophen instead.

Four: Time. Most pain gets better with time.

It will probably hurt just a little bit less day by day and week by week.

How long will depend on how you were hurt.

Five: Massage, acupuncture, or spinal manipulation by a chiropractor or other health professional.

Now, these ideas work differently for everyone, but many people feel better during and for a little while after these sessions.

Now, sometimes pain is your body's way of warning you that something may be wrong, so here are a few things to watch for.

Call your doctor if you have new or worse numbness or weakness in your legs; or if you lose bladder or bowel control; or if you have new or increased back pain with a fever and painful urination.

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Get emergency help right away if you also have chest pain or other heart attack symptoms with your back pain.

And get emergency help if there are signs of spinal damage after an injury from a car crash, a fall, or a direct blow to the spine.

These signs of spinal damage may include severe back or neck pain or being unable to move.

Luckily, when back pain happens, you can usually care for yourself to heal and feel better.

So what are those five things you can do to feel better?

They are heat or ice; movement; massage, acupuncture, or spinal manipulation; NSAIDs; and time.

Your back hurts now, but with care and a little time, it will get better.

Have patience and be kind to yourself.

And if you have questions, you can always talk to your doctor.