

## Crellin Chiropractic Pain and Injury Center

Andrew Crellin DC, RPT  
Alex Crellin DC

# Instructions for those with low back pain

Don't make matters worse by doing the wrong thing. Most people want to reach for the heat when they are in pain, it feels soothing and comfortable. It actually can be counterproductive by making the arteries dilate and bring more fluid (swelling) to the area. Ice is the better option by constricting the arteries and decreasing the swelling. Prolonged swelling will delay recovery and ice is better at controlling the acute pain. If you are feeling ambitious, start with heat for 10 minutes, followed by ice for 10 minutes, repeating the heat followed by the ice once more. This is called "contrast therapy" and can be very helpful. Always put a thin barrier between yourself and the ice, such as a pillowcase. A soft ice pack, frozen vegetables, or ice in a Ziploc bag all work well, but remember to place it inside the pillow case before placing on your body.

Sitting posture is extremely important to pay attention to. They say "sitting is the new smoking." Sitting without support behind your back is one of the worst things you can do to your body regarding spine health. Whether you are in the recliner, on the couch, or sitting on your bed propped against the wall, make sure there is a pillow tucked in the small of your back. Practice this habit not only when your back hurts, but everyday to create the healthy habit.

Listen to your body. The pain is telling you to slow down and stop doing that activity or your condition will get worse. Pain is trying to help you by sending out a signal of distress to your body. Much like parents telling a teenager not to do something, the teenager knows they shouldn't do it, but they really don't want to hear it. Parents and your body have one major characteristic in common, they are usually right. Yes, sometimes you have to fight through the pain, but if you just came into my office, now is probably not the time.

Don't spend too much time in bed or on the couch. Stay as active as your body will allow. Stick to activities/movements that are as close to pain free as possible.

Many medications doctors prescribe can cause constipation, and that's the last thing you need with back pain. You may want to try some preemptive increases in dietary fiber to counteract that possibility.

Sleeping can also be problematic. Try to sleep with a pillow between your legs when lying on your side. I know it won't stay there all night, but it will make you more comfortable and allow you to fall asleep a bit easier. You can also try putting a pillow under your knees when lying on your back. This will allow your back to flatten and relax. None of these will work all the time, but they are some options you can try.

Finally, back pain is just plain awful. It interrupts your life, your work, and your leisure activities. It makes you feel grumpy and impatient with everyone around you, even those trying to give you a helping hand. This is a very common reaction to pain and discomfort. Don't worry, it will pass. This is not who you are, this is you in pain and, we all react similarly.

Healing takes time. If you cut your arm and require stitches, you know it takes time for the tissue to come together and heal into a strong bond once again. Same thing is true with the tissues of your spine; it takes time to heal fully. Be patient with your body and give yourself time to get better.

Now follow instructions, don't miss your appointments, and we will get through this healing process together.

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