

## Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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## Relief for Back Pain

Does back pain or back tension have you tied up in knots? Back strain happens when you overstretch, or pull, a muscle in your back. You may hurt your back in a fall or when you exercise or lift something. Most back pain will get better with rest and time. You can take care of yourself at home to help your back heal.

When you first feel back pain, try these steps:

- **Walk.** Take a short walk (10 to 20 minutes) on a level surface (no slopes, hills, or stairs) every two to three hours. Walk only distances you can manage without pain, especially leg pain.
- **Relax.** Find a comfortable position for rest. Some people are comfortable on the floor or a medium-firm bed with a small pillow under their head and another under their knees. Some people prefer to lie on their side with a pillow between their knees. Don't stay in one position for too long.
- **Try heat or ice.** Try using a heating pad on a low or medium setting, or take a warm shower, for 15 to 20 minutes every two to three hours. Or you can buy single-use heat wraps that last up to 8 hours. You can also try an ice pack for 10 to 15 minutes every two to three hours. You can use an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a thin towel. You may also want to try switching between heat and cold.

### Other suggestions:

- **Stretch and exercise.** Exercises that increase flexibility may relieve your pain and make it easier for your muscles to keep your spine in a good, neutral position. And don't forget to keep walking.
- **Do self-massage.** Try self-massage to unwind after work or school or to energize yourself in the morning. You can easily massage your feet, hands, or neck. Self-massage works best if you are in comfortable clothes and are sitting or lying in a comfortable position. Use oil or lotion to massage bare skin.



- **Reduce stress.** Back pain can lead to a vicious circle: Distress about the pain tenses the muscles in your back, which, in turn, causes more pain. Learn how to relax your mind and your muscles to lower your stress.

For more help, contact the AHS Rehabilitation Advice Line at 1-833-379-0563, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This free telephone rehabilitation service is available for Albertans 18 years of age and over living with pain, decreased mobility, reduced endurance or strength related to a health condition. It provides access to occupational therapists and physical therapists for advice, education and information on how to access services in your community.

The Rehabilitation Advice Line is also available for community care providers seeking help for patients.