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## Back Pain Basics: What to Do



If you've suffered from low back pain over the past few days, or if you get back pain sometime in the future, the tendency will be to wait it out and see if it gets better. Sometimes we even decide to take time off and lie in bed, hoping we will eventually be feeling better and back to our usual activities or work. However, more and more research shows that lying in bed or waiting it out is the worst thing you can do for yourself. Remember, only 10 percent of people develop chronic low back pain, but those cases account for an estimated \$100 billion a year in health care and other costs. It's a safe bet that most of them have taken this incorrect

"wait and see" approach.

Research suggests that when it comes to back pain, early intervention is best. There are many reasons for this concept, but here is a basic summary of what current guidelines are saying:

- *Low back pain can sometimes be due to something more serious than a simple sprain.* That's why it's important to see your chiropractor right away so they can evaluate you for anything more serious.
- *Spinal manipulation is one of the only treatments* that is consistently being recommended for those with acute low back pain - and yet far too many people don't visit a chiropractor and choose to pop over-the-counter pain medication instead.
- *Avoid bed rest as much as possible.* Yes, I know that it feels good and frankly, when I had an episode of low back pain once, I was tempted to lie in bed all day, too. On a basic level, it's the most "rational" thing to do. However, bed rest actually wastes away your muscles, and this effect lasts even for the lucky ones who improve with their low back pain. For those who are pain free, the bad news is that the muscles still waste away.

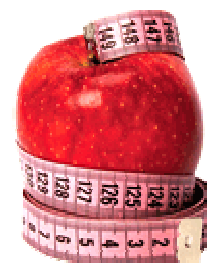
So, the next time you experience back pain and feel like you can't do anything, always remember that any movement or activity or treatment that keeps you moving is crucial for your recovery. Another factor is that you may be deconditioned and not fit enough. With back pain, you can become even more deconditioned. That's why starting to move and then progressing to an exercise program is crucial to ensure not only that you get better, but also that you don't get future bouts of low back pain. Talk to your chiropractor for more information.

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## Healthy Up Your Diet

We're in a war, pure and simple, and the majority of Americans are losing it. We're fighting formidable opponents including the fast-food industry, the soft drink manufacturers, and any company that mass produces processed and preservative-, artificial ingredient-laden food. It's time to healthy up your diet and shift the balance of food power. Are you ready to make healthier choices for a healthier life? It's not as hard as you think.



**Preparation** - Simple changes like replacing milk/butter with low-sodium chicken broth, baking food instead of frying, and using grape seed oil for cooking instead of butter can make a real, long-term difference in your health.

**Focus** - Don't bring more stress into the process! By taking a good look at where you are, health-wise, and talking to your health care practitioner about what you should focus on (reducing sodium or carbohydrate intake, getting more fiber, increasing your "good" cholesterol, etc.), you can get a handle on the changes that will make the most difference in your health.

**Variety** - Food boredom can mean you dread lunch and leave it sitting in the fridge at work, choosing to drive off with co-workers for a burger and fries instead. Making meals as interesting as possible means we will look forward to eating and enjoy it.

**Veggies** - Trying to fit a vegetable into every meal or snack gets us closer to the 4-5 cups recommended by the USDA.

**Realism** - Unless a chef plans your meals, we're each responsible for making our own healthy choices. Know what is realistic for you and change what you can. When you're comfortable with the changes you made, re-evaluate your diet again and see what can be tweaked. Stepping down from a mocha to coffee/hot chocolate can lead to a step down to green tea - a drink that both supports your health and warms you up!

Making healthier choices isn't easy, certainly not these days and certainly not when it comes to food, but the choices you do make can make a big difference. No one's telling you swear off your favorite foods (if they happen to be less-than-optimal in terms of nutrition); it's about shifting the balance of what you eat so you end up with more healthy foods and less unhealthy ones. Now that's a recipe for long-term health and wellness.

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## It's Great to Be Gardening



If you think gardening (the produce-yielding variety) is reserved for people with vast acreage and limited or no access to grocery stores and other modern conveniences, keep in mind that a garden begins with nothing more than a handful of soil, a few drops of water and the seeds of your favorite garden delicacy. Here are five reasons to develop your green thumb if you're not already doing so.

**QUALITY:** Unless your diet is already organic-only, you stand to benefit immensely from a well-tended garden that doesn't rely on pesticides and other chemicals. A little love and attention will yield fresh fruit and vegetables absolutely bursting with nutrition and flavor.

**PRICE:** Even the most generous produce company can't begin to compete with the low price of home-grown fruits and vegetables; just spend a little money on proper soil and some seeds, and you're on your way.

**ACCESS:** When was the last time you were in the middle of preparing dinner and realized you were missing a key ingredient? If that missing ingredient is something grown in your own garden, then the store is no farther than your own backyard.

**ENJOYMENT:** Gardening is great family fun, and it's so much more rewarding (and less expensive) than another trip to the movie theater or a new video game. Stay in shape, enjoy the outdoors and watch seeds turn to sprouts turn to food on the table. How cool is that?

**ENRICHMENT:** In general, people like to continually grow, learn and improve. Gardening gives you and your children an irreplaceable lesson in self-sufficiency and empowerment. Among other things, you learn that the best-tended garden often yields the best crop, something no book can teach.

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