



Physiotherapists:  
The Body Specialists

# Physio Tips

**BACK  
PAIN**

## Physiotherapy Association of BC

### **Oh, my aching back!**

Almost everyone experiences some type of back pain during the course of their lives. More than 70% of back problems begin during routine daily activities. Accidents and other forms of trauma account for only 30% of back problems.

Back pain can be due simply to a lack of exercise or a result of poor posture or body mechanics.

Poor posture or twisting movements during such routine activities as gardening, housework, picking up a child, reaching for an object or even coughing can cause acute back pain: pain that can last for hours, days or even years if ignored. The pain can be felt in the back or may be "referred pain" that is felt in the low abdomen, groin, leg or foot. Specific sensations can include pins and needles, numbness or a burning feeling. These should not be left untreated.

Normally, pain resulting from muscle or ligament strains will fix itself in the first 24 to 48 hours. If the pain does not subside after 24 hours, is happening regularly, is severe, or is getting worse, you should see your Physiotherapist.

The physiotherapist's focus is to treat the problem quickly, reduce pain and return you to normal activity as soon as possible.

Since so many factors can be the cause of back pain, physiotherapists offer a range of comprehensive treatment programs designed specifically for your individual case, including hands-on treatment such as:

- exercise prescriptions to strengthen and condition the back and stomach muscles that support the spine
- mobilization involving small movements of one or more joints in the spine
- manipulation which improves spine mechanics
- physical modalities which can include the use of heat, ice, or various types of electrical stimulation
- posture correction
- advice and education to prevent future back pain, as well as back protection strategies.

Your body will go through 3 stages of healing after every injury, and your Physiotherapist will help you through each stage.

1. **Inflammation** – Pain and swelling need to be controlled. Physiotherapists recommend: ice, activity reduction, ultrasound or electro-therapy to help with inflammation control and pain management.
2. **Repair** – scar tissue formation occurs, which is how your body mends; at this stage your Physiotherapist will prescribe therapeutic exercise for range of motion or stretching.
3. **Remodeling** – your body is rebuilding healthy tissue; your Physiotherapist will guide you through a strengthening or conditioning program.

Regular aerobic exercise, such as walking, swimming will help prevent injury and provide the condition a healthy back needs. A Physiotherapist will help you maintain your strength and fitness to minimize injuries and prevent re-injury.

Clinical research shows that early treatment of back pain prevents chronic back pain, and sufferers can return to work and other activity, enhancing their quality of life and general well being.

Physiotherapists are experts in movement and mobility, body mechanics, muscles and joints. They will help develop an exercise program specially-tailored to your needs, putting together the right combination of activities to improve physical fitness and avoid injury.

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