

2 Stretch right! Relieve sitting soreness!

Prolonged sitting compresses your spine, leading to the poor posture that often causes aches. The easy move that can cure—and prevent—soreness?

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WV Ask America's Ultimate Experts

“Help! My back is killing me!”

Almost all of us experience back pain at some point in our lives, and for many of us, it's a painfully regular occurrence. Fortunately, you don't have to suffer!

1 Pain-free made easy

Rule out injuries!

“The majority of back pain can be resolved on its own with a few lifestyle changes—be it reducing your stress or improving your posture—and rarely requires medical intervention,” says expert **Michael S. Sinel, M.D.** So when *should* you seek medical attention? “If your back pain is associated with numbness in your leg, it could mean you have a compressed or herniated disc and should see a doctor. Or if you wake up in the middle of the night with severe pain, or had a fall recently, then seek medical attention. Outside these examples, there's a lot you can do on your own to alleviate back pain.”



KO the #1 culprit!

The most common cause of back pain may take you, well, a b a c k :

“Stress accounts for more than half of all backaches!” says Dr. Sinel. “You've heard of tension headaches. Well, tension backaches are similar and are also triggered by stress, which causes muscles to tighten up. That's why it's important to identify what's causing your stress and take steps to relax your mind and muscles. Take an Epsom salts bath, for example. Epsom salts helps relax muscles, alleviating minor back pain. Meditation and yoga are also proven to be very effective.”

Go for a stroll!

The best exercise for back pain is deceptively simple, says chiropractor **Todd Sinett**: “Studies show people with back pain get better results from walking than from doing any other back exercise! Walking is great because it's a full-body exercise that gets blood flowing to your muscles and ligaments.”

Get enough Zzzs!

“Most people don't equate back pain with lack of sleep, but there's a big correlation,” says physical therapist **Janet Bezner**. “Gravity is a weight compressing our spines all day. Lying down and getting a good night's sleep helps our backs recover from that compression.” To maximize the benefit, she suggests lying flat on your back or on your side with a small pillow between your knees. “This puts your back in the ideal position.”



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Keep your core strong with a sky stretch!

Strong abdominals help support your back. And you don't have to do a million crunches to get a mighty core—simply do the opposite and stretch toward the sky “to counteract the hunching we do all day,” says Sinett. To do: Stand with your feet about hip-width apart, knees slightly bent. Lift your arms in front of you until they're extended straight overhead. Gently arch back slightly, stretching your abs. Do three sets of 10 reps daily.



Supplements can help!

- The anti-inflammatory effects of the **omega-3 fatty acids** in fish are shown to reduce chronic back pain. The study-proven dose: 1,000 mg. daily.
- **Vitamin B-12** slashes the stress hormones behind back pain and insulates nerve cells, so they don't send pain signals to your brain. The study-proven dose: 1 mg. to 2 mg. daily.

Contract your “corset”!

“There's a muscle in your abdomen that wraps around your spine, supporting it like a corset,” notes Bezner. “Just above the center of your belly button, imagine the number 12, and below it, imagine the number six. Suck in your stomach so that you're bringing 12 and six closer together. I do this when I pick something up because flexing that ‘corset’ supports my back.”

—Kristina Mastrocola

Our expert panel



Michael S. Sinel, M.D. specializes in physical medicine and rehabilitation pain management at Clinicare, Spinal Rehabilitation Medical Group in Santa Monica, California



Chiropractor **Todd Sinett** (DrSinett.com) is the author of *3 Weeks to a Better Back*. He has also been featured on MSNBC, *The View* and *Good Day New York*.



Physical therapist **Janet Bezner, PT, Ph.D.**, is an associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at Texas State University.



Andre Panagos, M.D., author of *Treat Your Back Pain Now*, is a clinical assistant professor in the department of rehabilitation medicine at the Rusk Institute at NYU Langone Medical Center.