

The Heilman Center for Pain and Spine Care Guide to Pain Relief



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Get back to living the life you remember, full of energy and free from the stress of dealing with your pain. Call us today to ask your questions or schedule an appointment at

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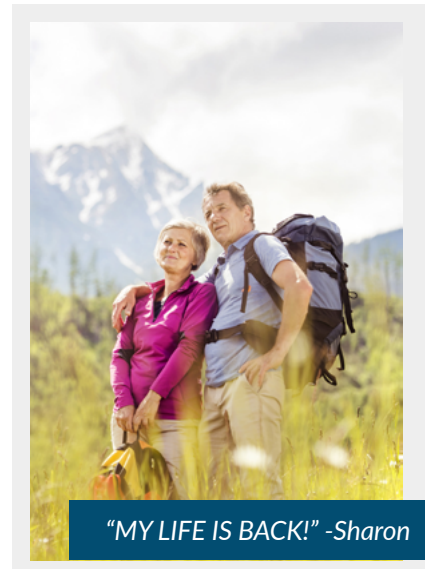
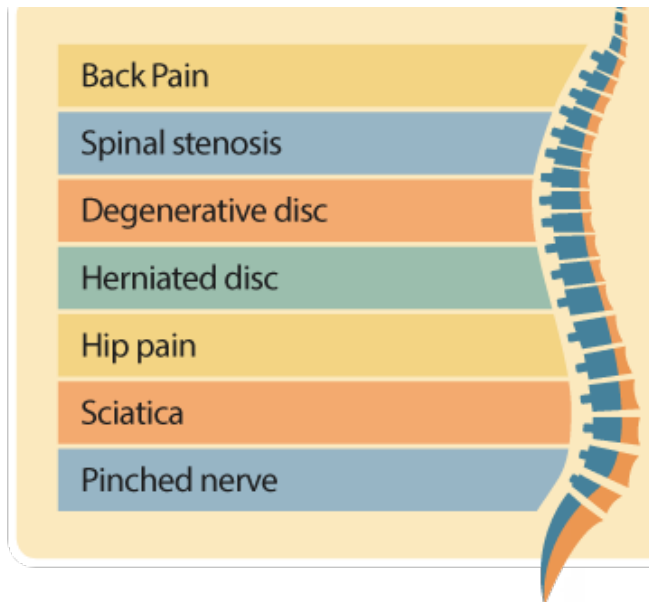
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Minimally Invasive Solutions For Lasting Pain Relief

You've probably been trying one referral, suggestion, or idea after another to find relief from your pain. But this frustrating, time-consuming process to get your pain under control can leave you feeling defeated and worn out, unsure of where to go next.

We understand that pain can get in the way of your every day life, such as simply moving through your day or getting a good night's sleep. Yet you don't have the time or energy to continually try doctor after doctor. Our pain specialists are all at one location and have extensive experience treating a broad range of pain conditions such as:

Back Pain
Spinal stenosis
Degenerative disc
Herniated disc
Hip pain
Sciatica
Pinched nerve

Pain in your arms or legs may be referred from your back or neck.

OUR APPROACH is focused on getting to the root of your pain, understanding its cause and solving it at the source.

Pain medication only masks the problem, and only an experienced pain specialist can offer real solutions for lasting relief.

Advanced diagnostic equipment is on hand to treat and correct pain. This provides a convenient way for our patients to get X-Rays and MRIs or other scans needed for their pain diagnosis. Our pain specialists are ready to interpret the results and explain the causes of your pain, then provide options for real pain relief.

Treatment Options

Interventional Pain Treatments

The focus of interventional pain treatment is to first find the underlying cause of your symptoms and then utilize treatment options to reduce or block the pain signal. These minimally invasive procedures are done on an out-patient basis so you can go home that same day. Our interventional pain physicians are board certified and highly experienced in these procedures.

Back and Spine Surgeons

Sometimes pain is caused by an injury or instability of the spine. Neurosurgical treatments for pain include effective, minimally invasive spine procedures developed through recent advances in technology, coupled with an improved understanding of pain. All other interventions are considered before surgery is recommended.

Your Next Steps

- 1** CALL our patient service team to schedule an appointment at 888 797-8400
- 2** COLLECT your recent MRI or X-Rays and complete your list of questions
- 3** ATTEND your appointment with one of our experienced Pain Specialists
- 4** GET a full assessment and review your options
- 5** CREATE your Care Plan with your Pain Specialist



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Everyday Exercises - Living With Low Back Pain



Start the Day With Gentle Activity

Slow, gentle activity in the morning can help wake up tired muscles and stiff joints. Just take it easy on your spine, says Raj Rao, MD, professor of Orthopedic Surgery and Neurosurgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Deep, relaxed breathing when you wake up may also be helpful. But certain moves aren't recommended if you have back pain -- ask your health care provider what's best for you.



Wear Comfortable Shoes

To help keep your back feeling healthy, choose comfortable, well-cushioned shoes. Although low-heeled shoes are best for everyday wear, heels aren't necessarily a no-no. Choose a pair with a cushioned sole, says Rao. Cushioned soles reduce the impact when you're walking on hard surfaces. This helps protect your back, hips, and knees.



Work Ergonomically

If you spend most of your day at a computer, your work station can affect your back's health. You shouldn't have to lean forward to reach your keyboard or see your monitor. Instead, move them closer, so you can keep your elbows at your side as you work, says Rao. You should also adjust your computer screen so it is just at or below eye level.



Know What Exercises to Avoid

If you've had a back injury or are dealing with certain back conditions, there may be some exercises that you shouldn't do at all until your doctor gives approval. These may include contact sports, racket sports, golf, weight lifting, dancing, jogging, and sit-ups. Your doctor may also advise against doing leg lifts while lying on your stomach. Ask your doctor about any other specific exercises you should avoid.



Start Exercise Gradually

Exercise is a great way to keep your back healthy. But if you've been inactive for a while, start slowly. Begin with a low-impact exercise such as walking, stationary biking, or swimming for about 30 minutes a day. Adding gentle stretching or yoga may also help your muscles. Ask your doctor what types of exercise are best for you.



Choose the Best Sleep Position

Sleeping on your side is the most common sleeping position. Placing a small pillow between your knees helps keep the back in a good position. If you must sleep on your back, try using a pillow under your knees. Avoid sleeping on your stomach, as this can make back pain worse.

Stretches- Stretching for Back Pain Relief

Almost everyone can benefit from stretching the soft tissues - the muscles, ligaments and tendons - in the back, legs, buttock, and around the spine.

The spinal column and its contiguous muscles, ligaments, and tendons are all designed to move, and limitations in this motion can make back pain worse.

General Tips for Stretching to Relieve Back Pain

Keep the following in mind when starting a stretching routine as part of a program of back exercises:

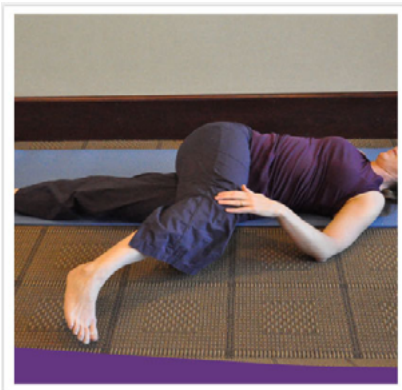
- Wear comfortable clothes that won't bind
- Stretching should be pain free; do not force the body into difficult positions
- Move into the stretch slowly and avoid bouncing, which may actually tear muscles
- Stretch on a clean, flat surface that is large enough to move freely
- Hold stretches long enough (20-30 seconds) to allow muscles or joints to become loose
- Repeat the stretch, generally 5-10 times

If one already has low back pain or neck pain, it is best to check with a physician or physical therapist to discuss whether the following neck, shoulder, and lower back pain exercises should be done.



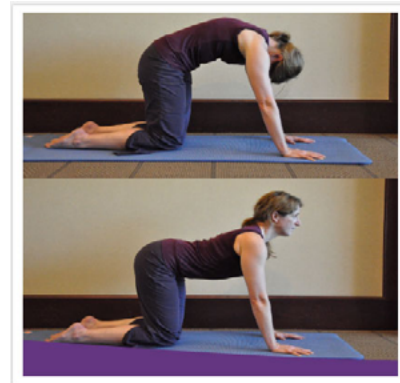
Knee to Chest

Use this stretch to align pelvis and stretch lower back and rear end muscles. Lie flat on your back with toes pointed to the sky. Slowly bend your right knee and pull your leg up to you chest. Wrap your arms around your thigh, knee or shin, and gently pull the knee towards your chest. Hold for 20 seconds and slowly extend the leg to starting position. Repeat three times each leg.



Lying Knee Twist

Use this movement to stretch the para-spinal muscles and strengthen the abdominal muscles. Lie on your back with your legs extended straight out. Bend the right knee up and cross it over the left side of your body. Hold in a position that allows you to feel a gentle stretch through the back and buttocks muscles for 20 seconds. Tighten your core muscles and rotate back to center. Repeat three times on each side.



Yoga Cat/Cow

Start this more by kneeling on all fours with your hands beneath your shoulders and your knees directly below your hips. Exhale and gently arch your spine. Inhale, tighten your core muscles and round your back, like a cat. Move slowly between movements and hold in each position for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

Managing Your Back Pain at Home

First, you should rest your back. This doesn't mean weeks of bed rest, as was once thought. "That's the worst thing you can do," says Jae Jung, MD, associate professor of orthopedics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California-Los Angeles.

Jung suggests resting your back for about 48 hours after an injury or after the first time you notice significant pain. After that, you can slowly increase your activity level. Getting up and moving as soon as spasms and sharp pains subside can help ease pain and stiffness.

Asking For Help- Should I See a Doctor for Back Pain?

Pain is our friendliest enemy -- it keeps us out of trouble even though it often seems to actually be the problem.

The body 'locates' pain near the surface quite well but has trouble indicating the source when the pain is deep. Pain from deep injuries, diseases or infections of organs, such as the heart, stomach, lungs and back may seem to come from somewhere else nearby or may radiate into multiple places. Intense pain may be more localizing but not always.

Therefore, when back pain is accompanied with other changes, fever, swelling, redness, heat, neurological problems or changes in body functions, the diagnosis may be sharper -- and the back pain diagnosis may be more serious.

Visiting a Doctor for Back Pain

So, if the severity of back pain does not serve as a guide for when to see a physician, the question is how does one know? While there are exceptions, there are several generally accepted guidelines of when to see a doctor for back pain:

If the back pain has any of the following characteristics, it is a good idea to see a physician for an evaluation:

- Back pain that follows a trauma, such as a car accident or fall off a ladder
- The pain is constant and getting worse
- Back pain that continues for more than four to six weeks
- The pain is severe and does not improve after a day or two of typical remedies, such as rest, ice and common pain relievers (such as ibuprofen or Tylenol)
- The pain is worse at night (most common forms of back pain are alleviated by rest)
- Severe pain at night (e.g. pain that wakes one up from deep sleep)



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Relaxation Techniques- Chronic Pain Control Techniques

To prepare for any chronic pain coping technique, it is important to learn how to use focus and deep breathing to relax the body. Learning to relax takes practice, especially when you are in pain, but it is definitely worth it to be able to release muscle tension throughout the body and start to remove attention from the pain.

Coping techniques for chronic pain begin with controlled deep breathing, as follows:

- Try putting yourself in a relaxed, reclining position in a dark room. Either shut your eyes or focus on a point.
- Then begin to slow down your breathing. Breathe deeply, using your chest. If you find your mind wandering or you are distracted, then think of a word, such as the word “Relax,” and think it in time with your breathing...the syllable “re” as you breathe in and “lax” as you breathe out.
- Continue with about 2 to 3 minutes of controlled breathing.
- Once you feel yourself slowing down, you can begin to use imagery techniques.

Specific imagery and chronic pain control techniques that are effective for pain control include:

1. Altered Focus

This is a favorite technique for demonstrating how powerfully the mind can alter sensations in the body. Focus your attention on any specific non-painful part of the body (hand, foot, etc.) and alter sensation in that part of the body. For example, imagine your hand warming up. This will take the mind away from focusing on the source of your pain, such as your back pain.

2. Dissociation

As the name implies, this chronic pain technique involves mentally separating the painful body part from the rest of the body, or imagining the body and mind as separate, with the chronic pain distant from one’s mind. For example, imagine your painful lower back sitting on a chair across the room and tell it to stay sitting there, far away from your mind.

3. Sensory splitting

This technique involves dividing the sensation (pain, burning, pins and needles) into separate parts. For example, if the leg pain or back pain feels hot to you, focus just on the sensation of the heat and not on the hurting.

4. Mental anesthesia

This involves imagining an injection of numbing anesthetic (like Novocain) into the painful area, such as imagining a numbing solution being injected into your low back. Similarly, you may then wish to imagine a soothing and cooling ice pack being placed onto the area of pain.

5. Transfer

Use your mind to produce altered sensations, such as heat, cold, anesthetic, in a non-painful hand, and then place the hand on the painful area. Envision transferring this pleasant, altered sensation into the painful area.

6. Age progression/regression

Use your mind's eye to project yourself forward or backward in time to when you are pain-free or experiencing much less pain. Then instruct yourself to act "as if" this image were true.

7. Counting

Silent counting is a good way to deal with painful episodes. You might count breaths, count holes in an acoustic ceiling, count floor tiles, or simply conjure up mental images and count them.

8. Pain movement

Move chronic back pain from one area of your body to another, where the pain is easier to cope with. For example, mentally move your chronic back pain slowly into your hand, or even out of your hand into the air.

Some of these techniques are probably best learned with the help of a professional, and it usually takes practice for these techniques to become effective in helping alleviate chronic pain. It is often advisable to work on pain coping strategies for about 30 minutes 3 times a week. With practice, you will find that the relaxation and chronic pain control become stronger and last longer after you are done.



Stress Relaxation and Natural Pain Relief

So, if the severity of back pain does not serve as a guide for when to see a physician, the question is how does one know? While there are exceptions, there are several generally accepted guidelines of when to see a doctor for back pain:

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- The pain is worse at night (most common forms of back pain are alleviated by rest)
- Severe pain at night (e.g. pain that wakes one up from deep sleep)

Stress Management: - Eliminating Stress Brings Pain Relief

It's easy to get stressed out when the pressures of work, family, and everyday life are weighing on you. These stresses can have not only an emotional impact, they can cause physical pain as well.

Stress and pain are often closely linked. Each one can have an impact on the other, creating a vicious cycle that sets the stage for chronic pain and chronic stress. So, part of getting pain relief is learning how to better manage stress.

"Lots of studies support the conclusion that what happens in the brain – depression, anxiety, being stressed out – can increase pain. At the same time, if you have more pain, you may be more stressed," says Jennifer Schneider, MD, PhD, a chronic-pain specialist and author of the book Living With Chronic Pain. "Each makes the other worse, so if you decrease pain, you'll likely also decrease stress and anxiety."

Pain Relief: Understanding the Stress-Pain Connection

It's not completely clear yet to researchers how stress and pain are related. However, stressed-out people often experience neck, shoulder, and back pain. This could be due to the link between stress and tension in the muscles. It could also be related to brain chemicals.

To allow us to keep functioning despite pain, the brain tries to maintain balance when it receives pain signals by minimizing these signals, says Steven Stanos, DO, medical director of the Center for Pain Management at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, and assistant professor in the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Northwestern University Medical School. But chronic stress can offset this balance. "Because pain [is regulated by] the nervous system, the brain is a key player in how we perceive pain," says Dr. Stanos.

"The brain is always trying to inhibit pain signals. But if you're stressed, simply put, the brain's ability to filter these pain signals is affected in a bad way and pain can be increased."

Pain Relief: Start With Stress Relief

One thing is clear: for many people, stress relief, be it avoiding stress or learning how to cope with it, can lead to pain relief.

"Patients need to manage their stress to be in the best psychological state to benefit from other therapies," says Carmen Green, MD, associate professor of anesthesiology and director of pain medicine research at the University of Michigan Health System in Ann Arbor.

Try these tips:

- **Get moving.** Being active can help decrease stress levels. “Make exercise a priority, whether it’s 30 minutes on an exercise bike or going to the gym four times a week,” says Stanos. Other stress-relieving activities can include walking or pool therapy. Consult with a doctor first if you’re concerned about how exercise may impact your pain.
- **Get more restful sleep.** Proper sleep can also help you cope with stress. “Restorative sleep can help you better face the turmoil of the day. So get enough sleep and better quality sleep,” says Dr. Green. “We know sleep impacts healing.”
- **Find a balance.** Our schedules are often packed, with little down time. Take the time to examine your daily routine and modify it for better stress control. “Identify leisure things you like to do and make them a bigger part of your daily routine,” Green suggests.

Try these tips:

- **Chill out.** Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, yoga, guided imagery, and meditation can essentially force you to relax and decrease stress levels. Once you’ve learned these techniques you can do them on your own at any time throughout your day.
- **Seek support.** Evaluation by a mental health professional, whether it’s a social worker with expertise in pain or a pain psychologist or psychiatrist, can also help you deal with stress and provide pain relief, says Green.

Recurrent pain can definitely affect your quality of life, but learning how to cope with stress can help you manage that pain and lessen its harmful impact.

