

Back Pain

Factors that increase our risk of developing lower back pain include smoking, obesity, physically strenuous work, sedentary work, a stressful job, anxiety or depression, female gender, or older age. Most back pain gradually improves with home treatment and self-care. Although it may take several weeks for the back pain to disappear completely, you should see improvement within the first 3 days of self-care. If no improvement is detected, it is recommended to schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider. If you would like to make an appointment at Student Health Services, please call 910-521-6219.

Treatment

- Over-the-counter pain relievers. Take a pain medication such as aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen to provide relief.
- Heat. Using a heating pad can help ease lower back pain within the first few weeks.
- Remain active. Try walking, swimming, or riding a stationary bike. These gentle movements may help to relieve muscle spasms. Avoid high-impact aerobic exercises, heavy lifting, contact sports or any activity that involves twisting or bending.
- Limit your length of sitting to less than 30-60 minutes at a time. If you need to sit place a rolled towel between the seat and the small of your back and sit upright with your feet flat on the floor.

Prevention

There are several things we can do to prevent the onset of back pain:

- The most important thing we can do for our backs is to remain physically active. Muscular strengthening and stretching is essential when caring for our backs.
- It is also important to bend and lift correctly. Lifting heavier items should always be done with our legs to avoid excessive back flexing. Bend down on one knee or squat, to raise the object push yourself up with your legs.
- Sleep on your back or side, with your knees bent. Place a thin pillow between your knees when sleeping on your side.
- Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor and a rolled towel between your chair and your lower back. Be sure that your shoulders are not slouched forward and that your head is not tilted forward.
- Maintain a healthy weight.