



LUMBAR STRAIN

Your doctor has diagnosed the cause of your back pain as lumbar strain, which is a strain of the muscle and ligaments which support the lower spine.

The most important part of your treatment initially is for you to rest your back so the muscles and ligaments can heal. If your doctor has prescribed bed rest, stay in bed all the time except to use the bathroom, for as long as your doctor recommends. A firm mattress is best. If yours is very soft, place a 3/4 inch thick sheet of plywood under the mattress.

Keeping your knees bent takes pressure off the back. Place an extra pillow or a rolled blanket under your knees to keep them bent. Sometimes lying on your side with your knees bent may feel more comfortable.

Avoid lifting or bending over. Always remember to bend from the knees, not the waist, thus using the larger, strong muscles of the legs and helping to prevent strain on the lower back. Avoid sudden movements.

During the first 48 hours, ice will help relieve the muscle spasm and pain. Soak a towel in water, wring it dry and place it in the freezer. When it is stiff, remove it from the freezer and place it on the area of pain. At first the towel will seem unbearably cold. Within a few seconds, however, the temperature of the towel should not bother your skin, and it will penetrate the muscles and provide pain relief. Leave the towel in place for 20 minutes. Repeat this at least three times daily.

Some people will find heat more useful. A towel soaked in hot water will provide moist heat that is more helpful than dry heat. Use this for 20 minutes, three times daily.

Aspirin or ibuprofen (available as Advil or Nuprin) will help relieve the pain and inflammation. Your doctor may prescribe other pain relievers or muscle relaxants if indicated. If you have no improvement with these measures or if you experience pain, numbness, tingling, weakness in your legs, or any problems, contact your physician.

RULES FOR LIFTING AND CARRYING:

1. Never twist to lift something or put it down; turn your feet instead;
2. Bend at the hips and knees, never at the waist;
3. Don't handle things that are too heavy;
4. Hold objects close to your body, not with your arms extended down;
5. Don't lift anything unbalanced;
6. Never carry anything above waist level.