

Tips to Help Prevent & Treat Back Pain

Ways to help protect your back:



Stretch

Extend your muscles and spine every day, and avoid long hours of sitting.



Exercise

Keep active and incorporate yoga, which has been shown to ease moderate to severe back pain.¹



Lift carefully

Bend your knees before lifting heavy objects and keep your back straight.²

Ways to help treat back pain:



Use ice, then heat

Use ice first to help reduce swelling. After a few days, try heat to help alleviate stiffness.³



Seek treatment

Visit a chiropractor, physical therapist or licensed acupuncturist for recommended noninvasive treatments, such as spinal manipulation, exercise and acupuncture.^{3,4}



Take medication

Take over-the-counter pain relievers to help ease discomfort and inflammation, but avoid the use of opioids.³

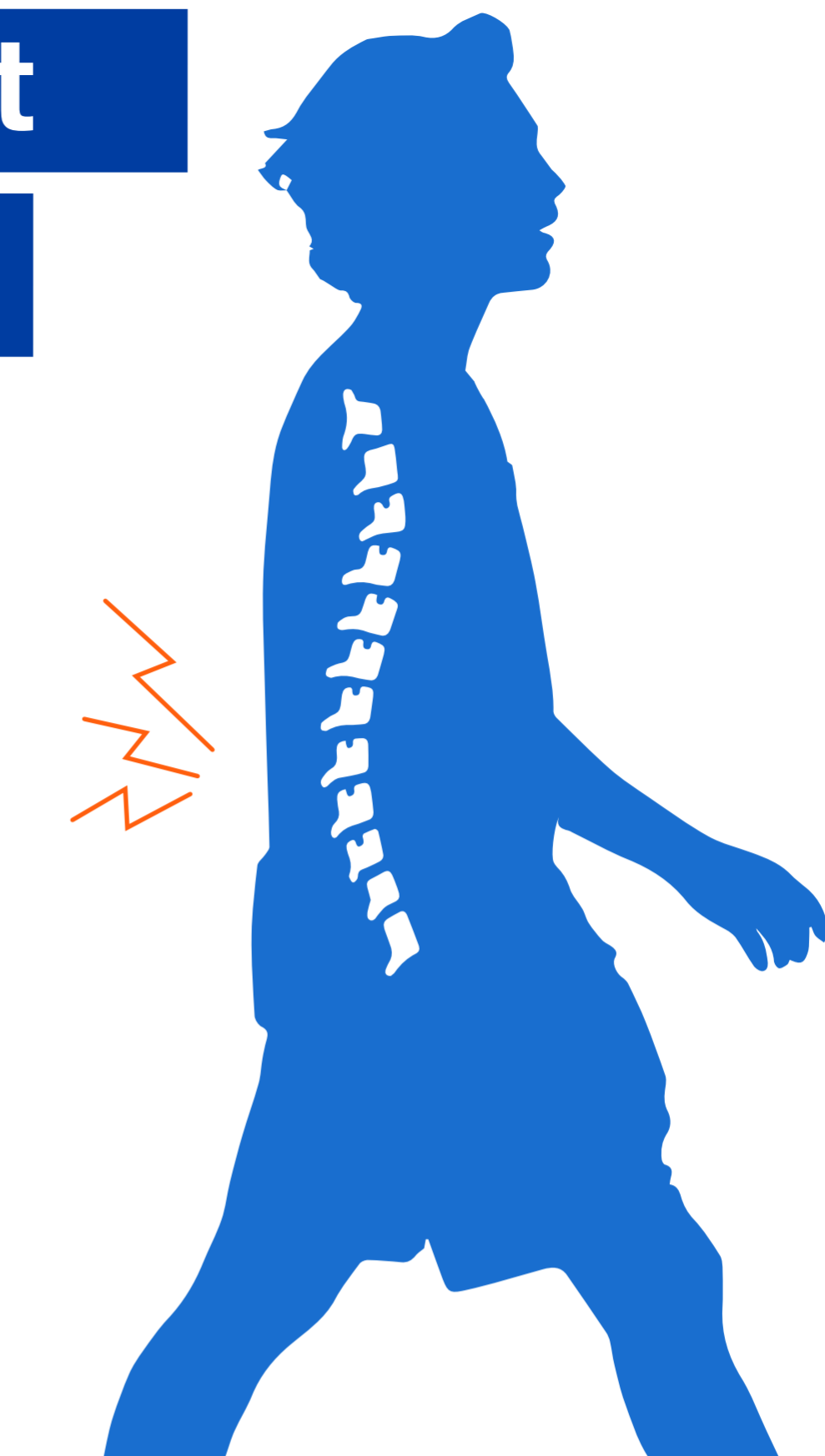


Limit invasive options

Unless it is a medical emergency, spinal imaging and surgery should typically be used as a last resort.⁴



Certain "red-flag" symptoms, such as fever or loss of bladder and bowel control, may require immediate testing and intervention.⁵



95%

of people with back pain recover within 12 weeks by using conservative care options such as physical therapy.⁶

20–40%

of spinal surgeries are unsuccessful, resulting in **"failed back surgery syndrome."**⁷

Some risks of spinal surgery may include:⁸

- Infections
- Blood clots
- Lung problems
- Chronic pain
- Spinal cord damage
- Paralysis

¹ National Institutes of Health (2017), <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/yoga-eases-moderate-severe-chronic-low-back-pain>

² Albert Einstein College of Medicine (2012), <https://www.einstein.yu.edu/administration/environmental-health-safety/accident-injury-reduction-campagin/top-injuries.aspx>

³ Harvard Medical School (2014), <https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/when-is-back-surgery-the-right-choice>

⁴ American College of Physician Guidelines. Noninvasive Treatments for Acute, Subacute, and Chronic Low Back Pain: A Clinical Practice Guideline from the American College of Physicians (2017), <http://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2603228/noninvasive-treatments-acute-subacute-chronic-low-back-pain-clinical-practice>

⁵ Harvard Medical School (2014), <https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/when-is-back-surgery-the-right-choice>

⁶ Cleveland Clinic. Chronic Back Pain (2019), <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/16869-chronic-back-pain>

⁷ American Society of Anesthesiologists (2018), <https://www.asahq.org/whensecondscount/preparing-for-surgery/procedures/back-surgery/>

⁸ University of Maryland Medical Center (2003), <https://www.umms.org/ummc/health-services/orthopedics/services/spine/patient-guides/complications-spine-surgery>

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