

Back Pain

Your health and safety are very important to us. Because of the large number of people with the flu, hospitals and emergency rooms are very busy. As a result, we are closely evaluating who we can take in the ambulance to the hospital.

We have evaluated that you do not need to go in the ambulance to the hospital at this time. Paramedics are giving you this sheet to help you care for yourself at home.

You can get medical care at a clinic, urgent care center or an emergency room. If you decide to do so, you will need to get to these places on your own. Remember hospitals are seeing a lot of patients with the flu. If you go to a hospital you risk getting infected with the flu.

There are many things that can cause back pain. Most of which are not life threatening. The following are things that you may try to make yourself feel better:

Back Strain

Back pain is a common problem. You can strain your back by lifting too much weight, or just moving the wrong way. Back strains can be minor pain or even severe pain. It can take weeks for you to heal. To help you feel better and to prevent further back strains, try the following tips:

- **Ice** - Ice reduces swelling and can help with pain. It helps the most if it is applied during the first 24-48 hours.
 - Wrap an ice pack or bag of frozen peas in a towel. Never place ice directly on your skin. It can cause cold injury to the skin.
 - Place ice where your back hurts the most.
 - Do not ice for more than 20 minutes at a time.
 - Use ice several times a day.

- **Medications** - Over-the-counter pain relievers include acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naprosyn. They can help ease the pain and discomfort. Some will also decrease swelling.
 - Tell your doctor about any medications that you are already taking.
 - Take medications only as directed.
 - **Do not use aspirin in anyone 18 years old or younger if they have a fever. Aspirin used during some viral illnesses like influenza can cause a deadly reaction called Reye Syndrome.**

- **Heat** - After the first 48 hours, heat can relax sore muscles and improve blood flow.
 - Try a warm bath or shower. Or use a heating pad set on low. To prevent a burn, keep a cloth between you and the heating pad.
 - Don't use a heating pad for more than 15 minutes at a time. Never sleep on a heating pad – you can get burned even on the low setting!
- **Exercise** - Exercise can help your back heal and can prevent re-injury. Ask your doctor about what exercises you should do. Start exercise gently and only increase the intensity over a period of weeks.

Use Good Posture to Avoid Re-Injury

- When moving, bend at the hips and knees. Don't bend at the waist or twist around.
- When lifting, keep the object close to your body. Don't try to lift more than you can handle. Turn a single heavy lift into several more manageable loads to lift.
- When sitting, keep your lower back supported. Use a rolled-up towel as needed.

There are some causes of back pain that are dangerous. Call your doctor if you have or develop any of the following:

- You are unable to stand or walk
- You have a temperature over 101°F
- You have frequent, painful, or bloody urination
- You have severe abdominal pain
- You have a sharp, ripping, or stabbing pain
- Your pain is constant
- You have pain, numbness, or weakness in you leg
- You feel pain in a new area of your back
- You notice that the pain is not improving after more than a week

This information is to help you care for a person who has back pain.

The evaluation and/or treatment by the paramedics today are not to replace the recommendation of a doctor.

You can get medical care by a doctor on your own.

You should call 911 for any medical symptom, concerns that happen after we leave today.



These Home Care Instructions are for use during specified times of severe pandemic influenza, courtesy of the Metro Region EMS System, Metro Emergency Services Board, 2099 W. University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55014-3431