

**Patient Information:**

## Upper Back Pain

- **Common Causes**
- **Treating Back Pain**
- **Quick Treatment: Back Pain**
- **See Your Healthcare Provider If**
- **Rehabilitation Exercises**

### COMMON CAUSES:

Upper back pain may be triggered by a specific event, such as improper lifting, bending, or twisting motion, or from poor conditioning (muscle strengthen/tone) and overuse. Bad posture, excessive weight and smoking can also be significant contributing factors.

Sport activities involving direct blows or tackling can lead to back ache. Passive activities like improper sitting positions are also common causes. Over time poor posture during study sessions or hours in front of the computer can innocently strain muscles of the upper back.

Long term back problems are more likely when pain develops gradually or discomfort is recurrent over a period of time. Chronic back pain is often triggered by prior injuries, especially if original injury was not allowed to heal completely.

After careful review of your daily activities, you may find that your mysterious back ache has an indefinable cause. The events preceding pain or discomfort will provide clues behind original cause even if the exact incident is not evident. Sufferers frequently complain that back pain developed for no apparent reason.

### TREATING UPPER BACK PAIN:

Most cases of upper back pain are not serious and respond to simple treatments.

- ◆ When pain develops suddenly or related to direct trauma, stop all strenuous activities to prevent aggravation of injury, increasing the damage, and healing delays.
- ◆ Most back pain is related to muscle strain rather than injury to the spine. Your back may feel tight or sore to touch. Muscle spasms may develop as strained muscles swell after injury. If related to trauma bruising may occur. Rest and gentle stretching will help the muscles relax.
- ◆ Headache is a common side effect of tight, sore muscles of the upper back and neck. What treatment? Over the counter medications can be taken to relieve headache symptoms
- ◆ Under most circumstances applying ICE will

reduce swelling and pain and can even accelerate your healing.

- ◆ Depending upon severity of injury an X-ray or other imaging study may be needed.

### QUICK TREATMENT : BACK PAIN

- ◆ If you suspect injury, stop activity immediately. Apply ICE. Wrap sealed ice bag in towel and apply to injury as soon as possible. Keep on injury for 20 minutes and repeat every 2-3 hours for the first 48 to 72 hours. This will help reduce swelling and pain.
- ◆ Tylenol®, Aleve®, or Ibuprofen may be taken. Follow package directions and take with food.
- ◆ After the first 72 hours heat can be applied. Stretching back muscles slowly after heating the muscle can help reduce stiffness.
- ◆ Research suggests most people can and should return to normal daily activities as tolerable. AVOID anything that significantly increases back pain. (then visit your healthcare provider)

In most cases back pain progressively improves over a course of 1-2 weeks without further intervention. During recovery, exercise with caution to prevent re-injury. Appropriate, slow, gradual rehabilitation and correct posture can reduce healing time and help prevent re-injury.

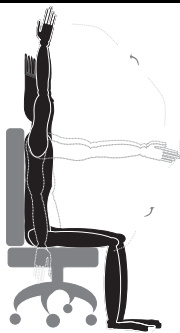
### SEE YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF:

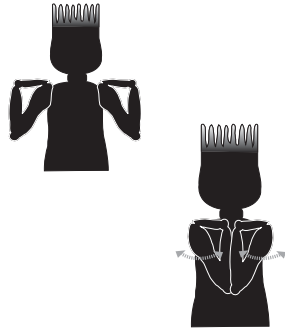
- 🚑 Back pain was caused by serious injury, such as direct trauma.
- 🚑 Back pain longer than one month
- 🚑 Numbness that fails to resolve

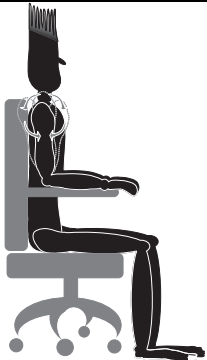
# Upper Back Pain Rehabilitation Exercises


## Rehabilitation Exercises

- ◆ **RECOVERY TAKES TIME.**
- ◆ Rehabilitation may take weeks or even months depending on severity of injury. The severity of the injury will dictate recovery time. Slow, gradual rehabilitation will reduce healing time and prevent re-injury.
- ◆ Once initial pain has eased a rehabilitation program of upper back strengthening exercises and stretching is recommended to help prevent re-injury and pain.
- ◆ Rehabilitation exercises are critical for the recovery process. Focus on the upper back muscles as well as the muscles of the neck and middle back.
- ◆ Do these exercises on a regular basis and you will see improvements in your posture, work endurance, and athletic performance. The exercises shouldn't irritate your back or neck when done properly. If there is pain, STOP.
- ◆ **HELPFUL HINT:** Take deep even breaths while completing stretches and concentrate on the exercises with slow steady movements. If you experience any discomfort other than muscle soreness, slow down the pace or decrease the number of repetitions. If pain persists, discontinue exercise and contact your healthcare provider.

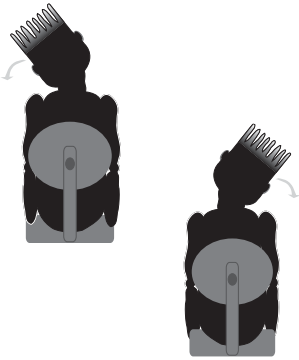
Cheer!		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Allow your arms to hang relaxed down at sides, and then raise them slowly upward over your head. Hold the stretch, before allowing your arms to slowly fall back to starting position.</p>		

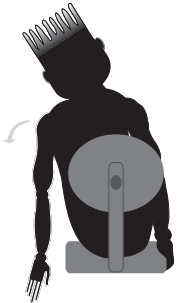
Butterfly		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b>  <b>POSITION ONE:</b> Place hands on shoulders with palms down  <b>POSITION TWO:</b> Keep hands in place and bring elbows as close together as possible until you feel a stretch in upper back. Hold, then return to position one.</p>		

Shoulder Roll		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Roll shoulders forward in slow circular motion. Make large circles first and then reduce to smaller circles before reversing direction.</p>		

Shoulder Shrug		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Lift shoulders upwards towards your ears and hold. Return to relaxed position before repeating.</p>		


# Upper Back Pain Rehabilitation Exercises


Head Tilt		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Slowly try to touch left ear to left shoulder and then right ear to right shoulder. Relax and repeat.</p>		

Neck & Shoulder Stretch		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Hold on to one side of chair and bend to opposite side while keeping your body straight. Hold stretch before repeating on opposite side.</p>		

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Hold on to one side of chair and slowly twist at waist to opposite side until you feel a stretch in middle of back. Hold and repeat with opposite side.</p>		

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Keep feet flat on the floor and lean your body forward as far as possible putting your head between your knees. Gently stretch your whole back before returning to upright position. Repeat.</p>		

Straight Leg Stretch		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Stand up straight. Bend over slowly toward your toes. Keep knees slightly bent. Feel stretch in back of thigh. Repeat.</p>		

Take-A-Walk		
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
		
<p><b>EXERCISE:</b> Take a 5-10 minute walk. Concentrate on relaxing your back and shoulders. Focus your thoughts <b>ONLY</b> on muscle relaxation during walk. <i>This will improve blood circulation to the legs and refresh your body and mind before the next study session.</i></p>		

**IF TIME ALLOWS, COMPLETE THE "STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH" AND "TAKE A WALK."**