

○ WHAT'S WRONG?

Low Back Strain



Your "lumbar spine", or low back, is made up of five bones stacked on top of each other with a shock-absorbing disc between each level. Your low back relies on muscles and ligaments for support. "Sprains" and "strains" are the result of these tissues being stretched too hard or too far, much like a rope that frays when it is stretched beyond its normal capacity. The term "sprain" means that the tough, durable ligaments that hold your bones together have been damaged, while "strain" means that your muscles or tendons that move your trunk have been partially torn.

Most people experience low back pain at some point in their lifetime, and 70% of those patients can attribute their symptoms to sprain/strain injuries. Lumbar sprains and strains may result from sudden or forceful movements like a fall, twist, lift, push, pull, direct blow, or quickly straightening up from a seated, crouched, or bent position. Most commonly, sprains and strains are not the result of any single event, but rather from repeated overloading. The spine can generally manage small isolated stressors quite well, but repetitive challenges lead to injury in much the same way that constantly bending a piece of copper wire will cause it to break. Examples of these stressors include bad postures, sedentary lifestyles, poor-fitting workstations, repetitive movements, improper lifting, or being overweight.

Symptoms from a sprain/strain may begin abruptly but more commonly develop gradually. Symptoms may range from dull discomfort to surprisingly debilitating pain that becomes sharper when you move. Rest may relieve your symptoms but often leads to stiffness. The pain is generally centered in your lower back but can spread towards your hips or thighs. Be sure to tell your provider if your pain extends beyond your knee, or if you have weakness in your lower extremities or a fever.

Sprain/strain injuries cause your normal healthy elastic tissue to be replaced with less elastic "scar tissue." This process can lead to ongoing pain and even arthritis. Patients who elect to forego treatment and "just deal with it" develop chronic low back pain more than 60% of the time. Seeking early and appropriate treatment like the type provided in our office is critical.

Depending on the severity of your injury, you may need to limit your activity for a while, especially bending, twisting, and lifting, or movements that cause pain. Bed rest is not in your best interest. You should remain active and return to normal activities as your symptoms allow. The short-term use of a lumbar support belt may be helpful. Sitting makes your back temporarily more vulnerable to sprains and strains from sudden or unexpected movements. Be sure to take "micro-breaks" from workstations for 10 seconds every 20 minutes. Following acute injuries, you can apply ice for 15-20 minutes each hour. Heat may be helpful after several days or for more chronic origins of pain. Ask your provider for specific ice/heat recommendations. Some patients report partial relief from sports creams.

○ THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP YOU

Here is a brief description of the treatments we may use to help manage your problem.



Joint Manipulation

Your provider has found joints in your body that are not moving freely. This can cause tightness and discomfort and can accelerate unwanted degeneration i.e. arthritis. Your provider will apply a gentle force with their hands, or with handheld instruments, in order to restore motion to any "restricted" joints. Sometimes a specialized table will be used to assist with these safe and effective "adjustments". Joint manipulation improves flexibility, relieves pain, and helps maintain healthy joints.



Myofascial Release

Overworked muscles often become tight and develop knots or "trigger points". Chronic tightness produces inflammation and swelling that ultimately leads to the formation of "adhesions" between tissues. Your provider will apply pressure with their hands, or with specialized tools, in order to release muscle tightness and soft-tissue adhesions. This will help to improve your circulation, relieve pain and restore flexibility.



Therapeutic Exercise

Muscle tightness or weakness causes discomfort and alters normal joint function, leading to additional problems. Your chiropractor will target tight or weak muscles with specific therapeutic stretching and strengthening to help increase tissue flexibility, build strength, and ease the pain. Healthy, strong, and flexible muscles may help prevent re-injury.

TREATMENT GOALS AND OUTCOME MEASURES

Your treatment will be most effective when scheduled at a rate of 3 times per week for 2 weeks. After this initial course of treatment we will reassess to make sure that you have met your initial treatment goal of at least 33% overall improvement. We will determine the need for any additional care after your reassessment.



THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF

Your everyday activities, habits, and postures can have a dramatic impact on your body. The following advice will help you minimize stress while improving your comfort and health:



Sleep Posture

Your mattress and the position you sleep in may affect your condition. - Choose a mattress that provides medium or firm support, such as a traditional coil spring or adjustable airbed. Avoid waterbeds, thick pillow tops, and soft, sagging mattresses.

- Always sleep on your back with a pillow either underneath your knees or on your side with a pillow between your knees. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- Keep your neck and back covered while sleeping to avoid drafts that could cause potential muscle spasms.



Lifting Mechanics

Here are some tips to help you lift safely: - Avoid lifting or flexing before you've had the chance to warm up your muscles (especially when you first awaken or after sitting or stooping for a period of time).

- To lift, stand close directly facing the object with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Squat down by bending with your knees, not your back. Imagine a fluorescent light tube strapped to your head and hips when bending. Don't "break" the tube with improper movements. Tuck your chin to help keep your spine aligned.
- Slowly lift by thrusting your hips forward while straightening your legs.
- Keep the object close to your body, within your power zone, between your hips and chest. Do not twist your body, if you must turn while carrying an object, reposition your feet, not your torso.

An alternative lifting technique for smaller objects is the golfer's lift. Swing one leg directly behind you. Keep your back straight while your body leans forward. Placing one hand on your thigh or a sturdy object may help.

EXERCISES AT HOME

The following exercises have been specifically selected to assist with your recovery and help minimize future problems. Exercises should be performed slowly and within a relatively comfortable range. Maintain good posture and breathe naturally. Do not hold your breath. Unless otherwise instructed, stop any exercises that cause pain, or radiating symptoms.

2 WAYS TO VIEW YOUR EXERCISES

ONLINE



OR NAVIGATE TO
www.HealthCom.io



LOGIN:
bsample6

TEMPORARY
PASSWORD:
(your current password)

DOWNLOAD
OUR HEALTHCOM APP



Current Exercises

Mad Cat/Old Horse



Perform 3 sets of 20 reps, 2 times per day.

Begin on all 4's with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Extend your back upward into a "mad cat" position. Next, flex your back downward to sag into an "old horse" position. Slowly transition back and forth between these two positions. Repeat in a slow coordinated movement as directed.

Hamstring Doorway Stretch



Perform 1 set of 3 contract/relax cycles, 2 times per day.

Note: on each side

Lie flat on your back with your leg elevated and positioned in a doorway as shown. "Scoot" toward the doorframe until your hamstring is taut. Contract your hamstring by attempting to push your heel into the doorframe for seven seconds. Relax and gently slide your buttocks toward the doorframe while keeping your knees straight to increase the stretch. Repeat three contract/relax cycles on each side, twice per day or as directed. Alternately, you may provide your own resistance by looping a belt or towel around your heel instead of using a doorframe.