

BACK BLISS: YOUR PERSONAL PATH TO A STRONGER SPINE

Lower Back Pain Relief – A New Era in Wellness

Living with lower back pain does not have to be a constant struggle. Lower back pain is a common issue that many adults face. Thanks to modern science and technology, there are numerous devices and tools available to provide relief right at home. Identifying the root cause of back pain is essential in devising a treatment plan. Common causes of lower back pain can stem from:

- **Mechanical Issues** – such as disc degeneration or herniation
- **Lifestyle Factors** – including poor posture or excessive lifting
- **Chronic Conditions** – such as arthritis or spinal stenosis
- **Traumatic Injuries** – resulting from accidents or falls

In a world where health and comfort are paramount, innovative approaches are continuously sought to ease daily ailments like lower back pain. We urge you to not suffer in silence. Pain management devices make pain therapy accessible at home, enabling regular treatments without the stress of scheduling appointments with professionals. Here are three tools available at most local retailers:



Electronic Massagers

By mimicking the hands and techniques of a massage therapist, electronic massagers target muscles and soft tissues, relieving tension, reducing inflammation and enhancing blood flow. Compact and portable, many electronic massagers can be used anywhere, offering relief on the go. Many electronic massagers come with different settings and attachments, allowing you to customize the pressure and focus area.

Heat Pads

Heat pads are incredibly user-friendly. With various shapes and sizes, they can be easily placed on the lower back and held in place with straps or simply by laying down on them. Many heat pads offer adjustable temperature settings, allowing you to find the most comfortable and effective level of warmth.



Lower Back (Lumbar) Support Pillows

The lumbar region of the spine has a natural inward curve and needs its own set of stretches and supports to return to a rest state. A lumbar support pillow helps maintain this curve, especially when sitting for prolonged periods – like at your desk or in the car. Lumbar support pillows promote proper alignment of the spine, which encourages a healthy posture. You can often find car-specific lumbar pillows in stores.

Other resources to consider might include chair massagers, foam rollers or group wellness classes that focus on stretching. Selecting the appropriate device or program for your specific lower back pain requires some considerations.

ALWAYS CONSULT WITH A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER...

to understand the underlying causes of your pain before making your selection of which at-home device is right for you and your situation.

Some of the items might be eligible under your Healthcare Flexible Spending Account (HFSA) enrollment. Please check with *Optum Financial* for a list of eligible expenses before making any purchases.



Choice Matters – Enroll 2024 Readiness Steps

As we gear-up for Open Enrollment, explore these Open Enrollment Do's and Don'ts to empower your benefit decisions. Your choices shape your healthy future. Let's go!

DO'S

- ✓ Research [Cook County Benefit Options](#)
- ✓ Discuss your families 2024 healthcare needs with your dependents
- ✓ Place the Open Enrollments dates on your calendar – Oct. 16-31, 2023
- ✓ Decide what informational session you will attend:
 - Tues, Oct. 17 – Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Auditorium, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Thurs, Oct. 19 – Stroger Hospital, Lower-Level Cafeteria, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Tues, Oct. 24 – County Building, 7th Floor, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Thurs, Oct. 26 – Criminal Courts Building, 2nd Floor Cafeteria, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- ✓ Enjoy Open Enrollment

DON'TS

- ✓ Miss your opportunity to:
 - Update your health benefit plan enrollments
 - Add or remove dependents
 - Enroll in a health and/or dependent day care flexible spending account (FSA)
 - Enroll in a voluntary benefit plan
- ✓ Wait until the last minute to start and finish your 2024 enrollment



25 days until Open Enrollment Kick-Off! Be Ready!

Practice Good Posture for Lower Back Pain Prevention

Proper posture allows for optimal breathing and circulation. Good posture is about more than just appearance, it is a vital aspect of overall health and well-being. Slouching or hunching can compress the chest and lungs, reducing oxygen intake, which can in turn, affect muscles and tissues, including those in the back. Understanding and practicing good posture, along with utilizing supportive tools like lumbar pillows, can be an effective way to prevent or alleviate lower back pain. Regular assessments by health professionals such as physical therapists or chiropractors can also be valuable in identifying and correcting postural issues that may contribute to discomfort. Here are some questions to consider:

What is good posture?

Good posture ensures that the spine is properly aligned. This alignment supports the natural curves of the spine, with the head, shoulders and hips balanced. When these areas are in alignment, the stress on the spine and its supporting muscles and ligaments is minimized.

Should I be concerned?

Poor posture can place additional pressure on certain muscles and joints, causing them to become overworked and fatigued. Over time, this can lead to strain, pain and increased susceptibility to injury, particularly in the lower back.

What are the long-term effects?

Bad posture can alter the distribution of weight and pressure on the discs that cushion the vertebrae. This imbalance can cause the discs to wear unevenly, leading to chronic conditions like degenerative disc disease and other spinal issues that cause lower back pain.

The Mayo Clinic's ["Good Posture Tips"](#) slide show can enhance your understanding of how good posture impacts not only back health but various aspects of your overall well-being.



Ergo Bliss

Ergonomically designed workspaces, supportive seating and awareness of body mechanics during activities can play a significant role in maintaining good posture and preventing lower back pain. This is evidence that our choices matter and can be the difference between optimal wellness and being in constant pain. Check out the Mayo Clinic's guide to office ergonomics ["Office Ergonomics-How-to-Guide."](#) Then assess your workspace for where you can make changes to provide more support for your spine.

Key Takeaways for Taking the Pain Away

All things considered, keep in mind that lower back pain relief increases when there is a combination of:

- **Curiosity** – investigate pain early and often
- **Localized pressure** around the area
- **Heating or cooling effects**, which signals the muscles to rest or engage accordingly
- **Periods of rest and recovery**
- **Stretching and proper form**, including good posture
- **Outside support** – devices and gadgets out there for your aid

