

Strain/Sprain (lumbar spine)

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A back that becomes painful after a hard day at work, a sudden movement, or an injury, has often sustained a strain or sprain of the muscles and ligaments of the back. Most of the stress associated with bending, twisting, and lifting heavy objects is concentrated at the bottom of the spinal column, and this part of the back is particularly susceptible to injury, especially in individuals with weak muscles because they lead a sedentary lifestyle.

A back strain usually occurs when the muscles surrounding the spine are asked to stretch too far, lift too much weight, or move in such a way that they sustain very small tears. As a result of the tearing of the muscles and ligaments, there is usually a microscopic amount of bleeding into the muscle, which results in swelling and painful muscle spasms. Often the muscles that are injured will be tender to the touch. Pain and spasms are the body's way of telling you that a muscle has been injured and needs to be protected from further use. As a result, you should avoid using the injured muscles during this phase of acute pain, and help them to recover by resting, applying hot or cold packs, and possibly obtaining a gentle massage to help ease the spasms.

Back strains and muscle spasms are very common and unfortunately, there is not an immediate cure for this type of an injury. However, most back strains can be effectively managed with a course of anti-inflammatory medications, a brief period of rest, and then a gradual return to normal activities. A physical therapy program that includes stretching and strengthening exercises can often help people heal more quickly and is also used to educate them about ways to avoid injuries in the future. Most of these treatments are directed towards reducing the muscle spasms and pain, so that patient is able to take part in their normal daily activities with a minimal amount of discomfort.

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