

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BACK PAIN

Danger signals

SEEK IMMEDIATE ATTENTION IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE

- Excruciating back pain
- Severe pain from back down a leg with weakness of the leg or difficulty controlling bowels or bladder.
- Back pain and a fever.
- Back pain and urinary symptoms.

Most cases of back pain are not serious and will resolve on their own. Helpful suggestions:

- Take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or Nuprin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). This will help to reduce the pain.
- Cold is usually helpful for the first 1-2 days after a back sprain.
- Heat may be more helpful if it feels like the muscles are very tight (in spasm).
- You should avoid anything that makes the back feel worse.
- Limited bed rest is appropriate, though it is very important to get up and walk around periodically so you don't feel too stiff.
- Massage is often helpful.

You should be seen by a doctor if the pain persists for more than 2-3 days and is not improving.