

# Low Back Pain



Sprains and Strains

## Taking Care of **PAIN**

TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING, AVOIDING, AND  
CARING FOR COMMON TYPES OF PAIN

Carpal Tunnel Synd



Pain of  
**Osteoarthritis**

Menstrual Pain



Headache



BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
WHITEHALL-ROBINS HEALTHCARE,  
MAKER OF **Advil**

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	<b>3</b>
Relieving Low Back Pain.....	<b>4</b>
Understanding Headaches.....	<b>6</b>
Easing the Pain of Sprains and Strains.....	<b>8</b>
Managing Your Osteoarthritis.....	<b>10</b>
Controlling Menstrual Pain.....	<b>12</b>
Taking Care of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.....	<b>14</b>
A Note About COX-2 Inhibitors.....	<b>15</b>

# Introduction



Every day, millions of Americans are affected by either short-lived or long-lasting pain. Pain is responsible for about 40 million visits to healthcare providers every year. It is estimated that:

- **15% of Americans have low back pain at some point in their lives**
- **40 million Americans battle recurring headaches**
- **20 million Americans suffer from arthritis pain**

All of us have experienced some type of pain in our lifetimes. It can disrupt our lives and limit our ability to manage day-to-day responsibilities. Pain also can be costly, with the potential for financial hardship due to medical bills and lost work time.

Knowing how to deal with pain is the first step toward relieving it and restoring a healthy lifestyle. This brochure provides information on common types of pain, self-care techniques that may provide relief, and warning signs that indicate you should contact a healthcare professional.

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# Relieving Low Back Pain

Surveys show that 80% to 90% of American adults suffer from back pain at some point in their lives. The good news is that most people with acute low back problems recover on their own within a few days to a few weeks.

Common causes of back pain are:

- **Physical labor performed incorrectly**
- **Sitting in awkward positions**
- **Wearing high-heeled shoes**
- **Poor posture**
- **Weak abdominal or back muscles**
- **Being overweight**
- **Stress**

More serious causes of back pain include:

- **Spinal tumors, infections, or fractures**
- **Neurologic disorders affecting the spine**
- **Sciatica—pain traveling along the sciatic nerve, felt in the thigh, buttocks, calf, and foot**

## How to relieve back pain symptoms

- **Apply cold packs to the painful area for 5 to 10 minutes, at 30-minute intervals**
- **Perform low impact exercises, such as walking or swimming**
- **Avoid strenuous activity, heavy lifting, bending, and twisting**
- **Avoid prolonged bed rest unless otherwise instructed by your healthcare provider**
- **Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes**
- **Maintain proper posture**
- **Take an over-the-counter medication such as Advil®, which can help ease low back pain**



## Preventing back pain

- **Maintain your proper weight.** Excess weight can contribute to back pain
- **Exercise regularly.** Regular exercise will strengthen bones, ligaments, muscles, and tendons and will improve muscle control and coordination. It also will improve your general health
- **Maintain good posture.** Stand erect, with your chin in, head up, and back straight
- **Try to manage your stress.** Stress can worsen the symptoms of back pain

## Contact your healthcare professional if

- **Back pain lasts longer than a few weeks in spite of self-care**
- **The pain is severe or is accompanied by high fever**
- **The pain is accompanied by rapid weight loss**
- **You feel numbness or weakness in your lower body**
- **You are unable to control your bowel movements or urination**

# Headaches

Most people occasionally experience a headache, but about 40 million to 50 million Americans suffer from headache pain on a regular basis. About 90% of headaches are considered “tension-type” headaches. Migraine headaches are less common but can be much more painful.

## Types of headaches

### Tension headache

The symptoms of tension headache include:

- **Pain at the sides of the head**
- **General feeling of tightness, like a tight band around your head**
- **A feeling of pressure in the head**
- **Tightness in the head, neck, and shoulder muscles**

### Migraine headache

The symptoms of migraine headache include:

- **Moderate-to-severe pain that is pulsing or throbbing**
- **Pain usually on one side of the head**
- **Pain that is aggravated by exertion**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Sensitivity to light or sound**

Migraine headaches can be so severe that they cause you to miss work or other activities because of the pain. Contact your physician for diagnosis and treatment.

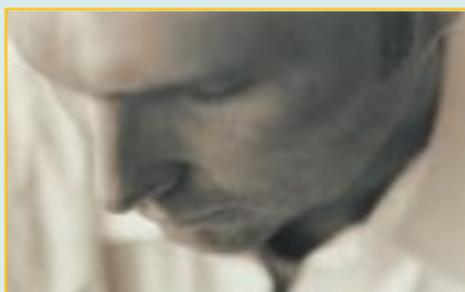
## Self-care techniques for headaches

- Practice relaxation techniques to counteract your body's response to stress
- Massage your neck muscles to alleviate tension and tightness
- Lie down in a dark room with a cool compress on your forehead
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as Advil® or Advil® MIGRAINE\* to relieve headache pain

## Contact your healthcare professional if your headaches

- Are severe and are accompanied by a fever, sensitivity to light, or a stiff neck
- Are accompanied by nausea or vomiting
- Are accompanied by confusion or weakness
- Are the worst headaches of your life
- Follow a blow to the head
- Suddenly become worse after age 40

\* Read product label before use.





## Easing the pain of Sprains and Strains

A *sprain* occurs when ligaments (tissue that connects bone to bone) are stretched and torn. A *strain* is caused by overstretching a muscle (tissue that produces movement) or a tendon (cord of tissue that attaches the muscle and bone).

### Self-care for treating sprains and strains

Following are instructions for the RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation) method, which can be used to help reduce pain and speed recovery of a joint or muscle injury.

#### R. Rest

Try not to put weight on the injured joint for 24 to 48 hours.

- **Use crutches to support an injured knee or ankle**
- **If you use only one crutch, place it on the uninjured side to help you lean toward that side**

#### I. Ice

Ice causes blood vessels to constrict, helping to keep blood and fluid from building up in the injured area.

- **Apply ice or cold packs for no more than 20 minutes at a time, 4 to 8 times per day**
- **Remove ice after 10 to 20 minutes to avoid frostbite**

## **C. Compression**

Compress the injured area to immobilize it and reduce swelling.

- **An elastic (Ace<sup>®\*</sup>) bandage may be used**
- **Other options include air casts, splints, and special boots**
- **Ask your doctor which option is right for you**

## **E. Elevation**

Raising the injured area above your heart will allow gravity to help reduce swelling by draining excess fluid.

- **At night, place a pillow under the area to support and raise it**

Try an over-the-counter pain reliever such as **Advil<sup>®</sup>** to relieve the pain of sprains and strains.

## **How to prevent sprains and strains**

- **Warm up and stretch before exercising, since cold, stiff muscles and ligaments are more susceptible to injury; cool down and stretch afterward**
- **Use proper sports equipment and techniques—wear well-cushioned, supportive shoes, for example**
- **Avoid exercising when tired or in pain**

## **Contact your healthcare professional if**

- **You cannot put any weight on the injured joint**
- **The injured area appears twisted or crooked or has an otherwise unusual appearance**
- **The area is numb or is very tender to the touch**
- **Redness or red streaks are visible around the injured area**

\* Ace is a registered trademark of Becton Dickinson and Company.

## Managing your

# Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis, or inflammation of the joints, is the most common type of arthritis in the United States, affecting an estimated 16 million Americans. Some risk factors for osteoarthritis are:

- **Female**
- **Age 45 or older**
- **Hereditary conditions resulting in defective cartilage and malformed joints**
- **Joint injuries resulting from physical labor or sports**
- **Obesity**

## Symptoms of osteoarthritis

- **Pain, stiffness, or swelling in or around a joint**
- **Typically affect the hands, knees, hips, feet, or back**

## Tips for managing your osteoarthritis

- **Reduce excess weight—this may lessen strain on affected joints, helping to reduce joint pain**
- **Apply cold or heat**
  - A cold pack often dulls the sensation of pain and reduces swelling. Apply for about 15 minutes at a time. Do not apply cold if you have poor circulation
  - A heating pad placed on the affected area for about 15 minutes at a time also can help relieve pain
  - Care should be taken when applying heat or cold. Ask your doctor



- **Take an over-the-counter pain medication such as Advil® to relieve minor joint pain. While your doctor is the only one who can decide if a prescription pain reliever is right for you, the medicine in Advil has been proven to be as effective as the prescription drug Vioxx®\* (a “COX-2” agent) in oral surgery studies**
- **Exercise. A sensible exercise program may ease pain and help you avoid disability**
- **Consider massage. Massage by a trained therapist can increase blood flow and lessen symptoms**
- **Protect your joints. Consider using a splint or brace to rest a painful or injured joint**

## **Contact your healthcare professional if you**

- **Have joint pain, stiffness, or swelling for more than 2 weeks and have never been diagnosed with arthritis**

\* Vioxx is a registered trademark of Merck & Co., Inc.

## Controlling Menstrual Pain

Menstrual pain, also known as dysmenorrhea, is discomfort usually felt just before and during the first few days of the menstrual period. The pain is believed to be caused by contractions of the uterus, which are thought to result from the release of hormones called prostaglandins from the uterine lining.

As many as 90% of women may experience menstrual pain. For many of these women, the pain can be severe, sometimes interfering with everyday activities. Women who had their first period at a very young age are more likely to have painful periods.

Symptoms of menstrual pain include:

- **Cramps in the lower abdomen that may also affect the lower back or legs**
- **Diarrhea or constipation**
- **Nausea**
- **Headache**
- **Urge to urinate**
- **Vomiting**



## Self-care tips for relieving menstrual pain

- Try to get plenty of exercise. Regular exercise may help reduce menstrual pain
- Apply heat to the lower abdomen using a hot water bottle or heating pad. (Limit the temperature and duration of treatment to avoid burns.)
- Be sure to get adequate sleep every night
- Limit your intake of caffeine
- Limit alcohol and tobacco use
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as Advil®. While your doctor is the only one who can decide if a prescription pain reliever is right for you, prescription drugs such as the COX-2 inhibitor Vioxx® have not been proven any more effective than the medicine in Advil® in oral surgery studies

## Contact your healthcare professional if you experience

- Pain so severe that it disrupts your normal life
- Symptoms not relieved by self-care

## Taking care of

# Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

The carpal tunnel is a narrow passageway in the wrist that is made up of bone, ligament, and tendons. The top portion of the tunnel is formed by a band of ligament that crosses the wrist. A major nerve called the median nerve passes through this tunnel. In carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive movement of the hand or wrist leads to inflammation of the membranes surrounding the tendons, pressing the median nerve against the band of ligament. Symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome include:

- **Numbness or tingling in the fingers of one or both hands**
- **Difficulty making a fist**
- **A weaker-than-normal hand grip**

## Self-care for carpal tunnel syndrome

- **Stop activity if you experience wrist pain and resume activity gradually**
- **Alternate tasks to give your hands a rest**
- **Ask your doctor if you should use a splint to keep your wrist straight while sleeping (and while awake, if necessary)**
- **Use an over-the-counter (OTC) pain reliever such as Advil® to relieve the pain associated with carpal tunnel syndrome**

## How to prevent carpal tunnel syndrome

- **Take frequent breaks from repetitive hand motion throughout the day**
- **When possible, avoid tasks that cause you pain**



- **Change your lifestyle and/or daily activities to exclude tasks that put pressure on the wrists**

### **Contact your healthcare professional if**

- **Pain or numbness is severe and is not relieved by self-care techniques**
- **Your hand grip becomes weak**
- **You find it difficult to make a fist**

## **A Note About COX-2 Inhibitors**

Prescription drugs such as the COX-2 inhibitor Vioxx have been proven no more effective in relieving pain than currently available OTC medications. In fact, several clinical studies in patients with pain after oral surgery have shown that the medicine in **Advil**<sup>®</sup> works as fast and as well as the medicine in Vioxx. While your doctor is the only one who can decide whether a prescription pain reliever is right for you, you may find that an OTC pain reliever works just as well!

**Advil<sup>®</sup>**

**For further information, visit: [www.advil.com](http://www.advil.com)**