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The Very Best Products for Treating Lower Back Pain
By Margaret Kohut

Lower back pain is a leading cause of visits to physicians and pain management physicians. Most of this sort of pain is caused by physical over-exertion; time and rest are usually the best treatments for this type of back pain. However, lower lumbar area back pain can also be caused by conditions like herniated (ruptured) spinal disks. If you've suffered a severe back injury and are experiencing unrelenting, incapacitating pain, make an immediate appointment with your physician! This is not a condition that you can self-treat. Herniated spinal disks that press on nerve endings can cause excruciating pain, and even paralysis; treatment of this condition requires MRI testing and the skills of a physician familiar with treating back pain.

Many people suffer from lower back pain due to improperly picking up heavy objects, slipping and falling, osteoporosis and other causes. If this is your case, this article contains some well-researched tips that may help you ease that annoying, painful condition. If, having tried these methods, you still have back pain, please see your physician. The products below have been tried by back

pain patients who have achieved some degree of success. Often, you will have to use the "trial and error" method of determining which self-treatment works best for you.

First, the application of heat to the affected area can be helpful. Sunbeam makes a heating pad that works very well for back pain; it's well-padded, has a temperature regulator that shuts off automatically after two hours and is large enough to reach all the way around your back. You should NEVER sleep with an operating heating pad; this could result in severe burns. Buy a pad that shuts itself off, just in case.

You can purchase heating thermal patches at your local drug store. Instead of lying down with a heating pad, these thermal patches, such as the Thermal Strip, allow you to continue with your daily routine while it provides warmth on the painful areas of your back. Follow the package directions and make sure you don't over-use the patches. If you notice signs of skin irritation at the site of the patch, stop using it right away.

Massage therapy is extremely successful in treating lower back pain. Since this form of treatment can be pricey - up to \$60 per hour - and isn't covered by most insurance plans, consider trying a massaging whirl pool device in your bathtub. Hometics makes a reasonably-priced unit that fits over the rim of your tub, creating a soothing whirlpool that you can aim directly at the painful areas of your back. The company advises that you enjoy your "bath spa" for 15-30 minutes at a time, every day until your pain improves.

Do you have a back-support pillow? How about a special mattress for back pain sufferers? The best-selling brand of back support pillows and mattresses is Doctor's Choice,

available at Denver Mattress stores or other fine furniture stores. Once you have these products, you'll notice an immediate difference in your sleep patterns. The Doctor's Choice mattress doesn't feel like you're sleeping on a cement slab, as other brands sometimes do. It firmly supports your back, but is also specially padded and extremely comfortable. If you purchase the gel-foam mattress cover, you'll be amazed at how soft the bed feels as it supports your back. No more tossing and turning, trying to get comfortable. No more waking up feeling stiff and achy. Special mattress and pillows are **tax deductible** if you acquire a statement from a physician stating that you need these items; physicians are very accommodating in recommending back-support mattresses. Doctor's Choice mattresses are no more expensive than "regular" good-quality mattresses; a queen-size mattress, gel pad and pillow set costs about \$700 and have a 15-year warranty for the mattress itself.

One essential product that you may not realize you need is a back-support cushion for the chair in your office, the chair you sit in while you watch TV, and the seat in your car. Core Products makes a back-support cushion that keeps your back straight and well-aligned while you're sitting or driving. The cushion sells for around \$20 at medical supply stores. Since uncomfortable chairs and car seats, plus poor posture while sitting or driving, aggravates lower back pain, this cushion makes sure you're sitting up straight rather than slouching in your chair or car seat.

What about medications? You have several options with over-the-counter medications. Acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol and other pain medications, is an excellent pain reliever, but you must be cautious in using it. Over-use of acetaminophen can cause serious liver disease, especially if you drink alcohol. Never take more

than the recommended daily dose, and do not drink alcohol while you're taking acetaminophen. Ibuprofen is the active ingredient in Motrin, Aleve, and Advil. This drug is an NSAID – non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. It reduces pain and swelling in your lower back. It too must not be over-used; NSAIDs can cause gastric pain and ulcers if used in large quantities for prolonged periods of time. If you experience some stomach pain while taking an NSAID, try some Pepto-Bismol to coat your stomach and prevent irritation by the NSAID. Always take an NSAID with food to help avoid stomach irritation.

Another type of medication is **homeopathic** compounds. These are very small quantities of herbal remedies that are available in drug stores and natural food and health stores, as well as via the Internet. Radiance Remedies makes a homeopathic compound that contains all-natural ingredients and is made in accordance with the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States. Yet another popular homeopathic remedy is Dr. Frank's Joint and Muscle Pain Relief Spray, available on the Internet. Both of these back pain remedies are used under the tongue ("sublingual"), which is a very effective spot for the ingredients to quickly absorb into your blood stream. Homeopathic compounds are safe and cause no harm when used correctly. Nor are they any more expensive than other over-the-counter medications. They either work for you, or they don't. Again, you may have to do some "trial and error" investigation to see if homeopathy helps you.

Finally, a very popular and effective treatment for lower back pain is the use of a TENS unit; you will need a doctor's prescription to buy a unit, but once you have it you may use it as you wish. The TENS is about the size of a pager and is battery-operated. It clips easily to your belt or underwear. Attached via thin cords to adhesive

electrode patches that you place on your areas of pain, the TENS delivers a mild electrical stimulation to your sore back muscles. You can adjust the strength and rate of the electrical stimulation until it feels like a super-quick massage. The Johari TENS is a best-seller because of its history of durability. You can buy the Johari TENS unit and the electrode patches at a medical supply company for about \$200, which is tax deductible.

Take your lower back pain seriously; pain is our body's way of telling us that something's wrong. Learn to live and work in a manner that doesn't strain your lower back muscles, and you can save yourself a lot of discomfort and expense.