

# TOP 10 TIPS

## FROM SOUTHWEST SPINE & SPORTS TO REDUCE PAIN



### 1. Stop smoking and drinking

Smoking has been shown to delay healing, increase pain sensitivity and make a person require higher amounts of pain medication. Drinking alcohol can have serious interactions, even with over-the-counter pain medications. Avoid problems by eliminating unnecessary exposure to these toxins.

### 2. Exercise

Exercise can reduce your pain and elevate your mood. When you exercise, your body releases endorphins, which are natural painkillers. Regular exercise can decrease chronic pain and prevent new injuries. Your doctor can help you decide what type of exercise is best for your condition.

### 3. Adjust your workspace

Using good posture and body mechanics can help you avoid neck, arm and lower back pain. Your workstation chair should have solid lumbar support. Make sure to keep your hips all the way back in the seat. Monitors should be directly in front of you, just below eye level and easy to see while sitting back in your chair. Keyboards should be at elbow height with your wrists straight.

### 4. Take frequent rest breaks

Change positions at least every 30 minutes. This accomplishes two things: It allows active muscles and tendons to take a short break; it also allows stationary muscles, such as those in your neck, back and shoulders to move and stretch, increasing blood flow.

### 5. Optimize your sleep

Sleep has a powerful influence on our perception of pain. It is essential for optimizing the healing process. Getting a full night's sleep means seven to nine hours per night for almost all people. If you have back pain, place a pillow between your knees when lying on your side or place it behind your knees when sleeping on your back. Make sure your pillow is the correct height to keep your head aligned with the rest of your body.

### 6. Practice proper lifting

Many lower back injuries occur with bending or twisting. Get as close as possible to the object and keep it close. Bend using your knees, not your back. Never twist your torso to either side while lifting or holding an object. Use two people for lifts that exceed your limit.

### 7. Lose weight

People who are overweight are at increased risk for back pain, joint pain, muscle strains and injuries. Many people with pain report feeling significant improvement in their pain even with modest weight loss. Track your caloric intake and exercise.


### 8. Manage acute injuries

Use "RICE" (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) therapy for minor sprains and strains. This includes temporarily resting the affected area, applying ice for short periods several times a day, using a compression wrap (e.g. ACE) for any local swelling and elevating the effected limb when possible. Over-the-counter, anti-inflammatory medications may further decrease pain and swelling.

### 9. Recognize when to see a doctor

Most painful conditions will resolve themselves or at least improve within several days. If your pain does not improve, is severe, or is limiting your function, you may have a more serious underlying problem that needs evaluation by a physician. In general, if your pain is a concern to you, seek qualified medical advice.

### 10. See a physician who specializes in musculoskeletal medicine

Seek physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) for musculoskeletal and nerve problems. The majority of painful conditions can be treated successfully using comprehensive nonsurgical care. 

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