

The Spine Column

Issue 2, 2021

Using Heat or Ice to Relieve Low Back Pain

Some people who experience low back pain find that heat or cold help lower their pain. Follow these suggestions if you would like to try heat or cold for low back pain.

Heat to Relieve Low Back Pain

- Apply heat for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Moist heat (hot packs, baths, showers) works better than dry heat
- Try an all-day heat wrap, available in pharmacies
- If you are using an electric heating pad, avoid falling asleep while the pad is on. If you think you might fall asleep, set an alarm clock to go off in 20 minutes. Use heating pads set on low or medium, never on high

Ice to Relieve Low Back Pain

Ice and cold packs may relieve pain, swelling, and inflammation from injuries and other conditions such as arthritis. Use either a commercial cold pack or:

- **An ice towel.** Wet a towel with cold water and squeeze it until it is just damp. Fold the towel, place it in a plastic bag, and freeze it for 15 minutes. Remove the towel from the bag and place it on the affected area
- **An ice pack.** Put about one pound of ice in a plastic bag. Add water to barely cover the ice. Squeeze the air out of the bag and seal it. Wrap the bag in a wet towel and apply it to the affected area
- **A bag of frozen vegetables**
- **An ice cup.** Fill a paper cup two-thirds full of water and freeze it until it is solid ice. Before use, peel back enough paper to expose some of the ice. Rub the ice over the affected area for three to five minutes
- Ice the area at least three times a day. For the first three days, ice for 10 minutes once an hour the first day, then every two to three hours. After that, a good pattern is to ice for 10 to 15 minutes three times a day. Also, ice after any prolonged activity or vigorous exercise
- Always keep a damp cloth between your skin and the cold pack and press firmly against all the curves of the affected area. Do not apply ice for longer than 15 to 20 minutes at a time. And do not fall asleep with the ice on your skin

Contact Us

1-866-942-7966
Monday–Friday,
8:30 am–5:00 pm
TTY: 1-800-662-1220

We Value Your Opinion

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at mvplistsens.com.

All responses are 100% confidential and help create a better experience.

MVP Health Care offers a health management program for members living with chronic back pain. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement's (ICSI) health care guidelines for the treatment of adult low back pain. This program must be coordinated with your physician.





Switch it Up: Try switching between heat and cold: use heat for 15 to 20 minutes, then a few hours later use ice for 10 to 15 minutes.

Easing Back into Your Daily Activities

Bed rest of more than a couple of days may make your low back pain worse and lead to other problems such as stiff joints and muscle weakness. If you do use bed rest for a short time, remember the following guidelines:

- Sitting up in bed puts additional pressure on the intervertebral discs. Lying on your side puts a little more pressure on the discs than lying on your back
- Trying to eat a meal in bed can be awkward and can put more strain on your back than if you get up and eat at a table

Avoid activities that make your pain worse.

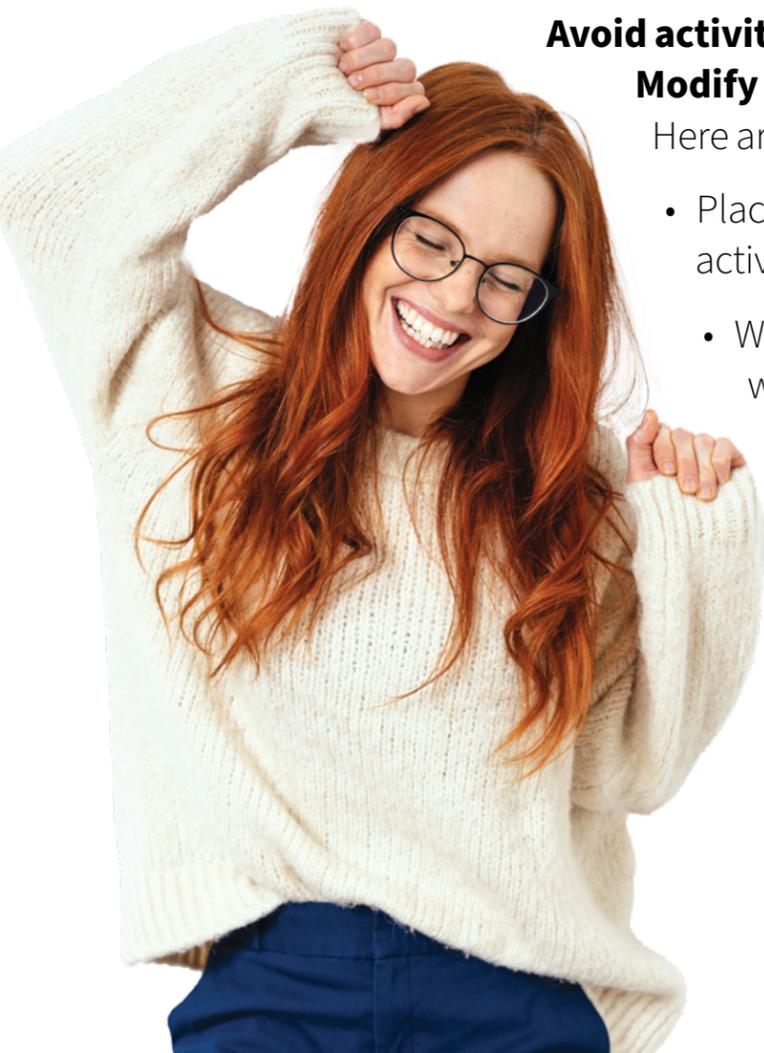
Modify activities that you cannot avoid doing.

Here are some tips:

- Place one foot on a stool when standing for an activity such as brushing your teeth
- When putting on pants or stockings, stand with your back against a wall. Then slide your shoulders down the wall as you bend your knees. Gently step into your pants or stockings, one leg at a time

Return to your normal activity gradually but as soon as possible.

Start with walking 10 to 20 minutes every two to three hours.



Lower Your Risk of the Flu and Pneumonia

It is important to get vaccinated against the flu each year, and pneumonia as directed by your doctor. Pneumonia is a lung infection that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Signs of it include coughing, fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing or shortness of breath, chills, or chest pain. Many pneumonia-related deaths are preventable through vaccination and appropriate treatment.

Certain people are more likely to become ill with pneumonia:

- Adults age 65 or older
- Children younger than age five
- People under the age of 65 who have underlying medical conditions (like diabetes or HIV/AIDS)
- People ages 19–64 who smoke cigarettes
- People ages 19–64 who have asthma

Simple steps to preventing the flu and pneumonia:

- Wash your hands regularly
- Clean hard surfaces that are touched often (like doorknobs and countertops)
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, your elbow, or sleeve
- Limit your exposure to cigarette smoke
- Take steps to treat, control, and prevent conditions like diabetes and HIV/AIDS

Get vaccinated. Several vaccines prevent infections that can cause pneumonia, including Pneumococcal, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), Pertussis (whooping cough), and seasonal influenza (flu) vaccines. Talk to your doctor for more information.

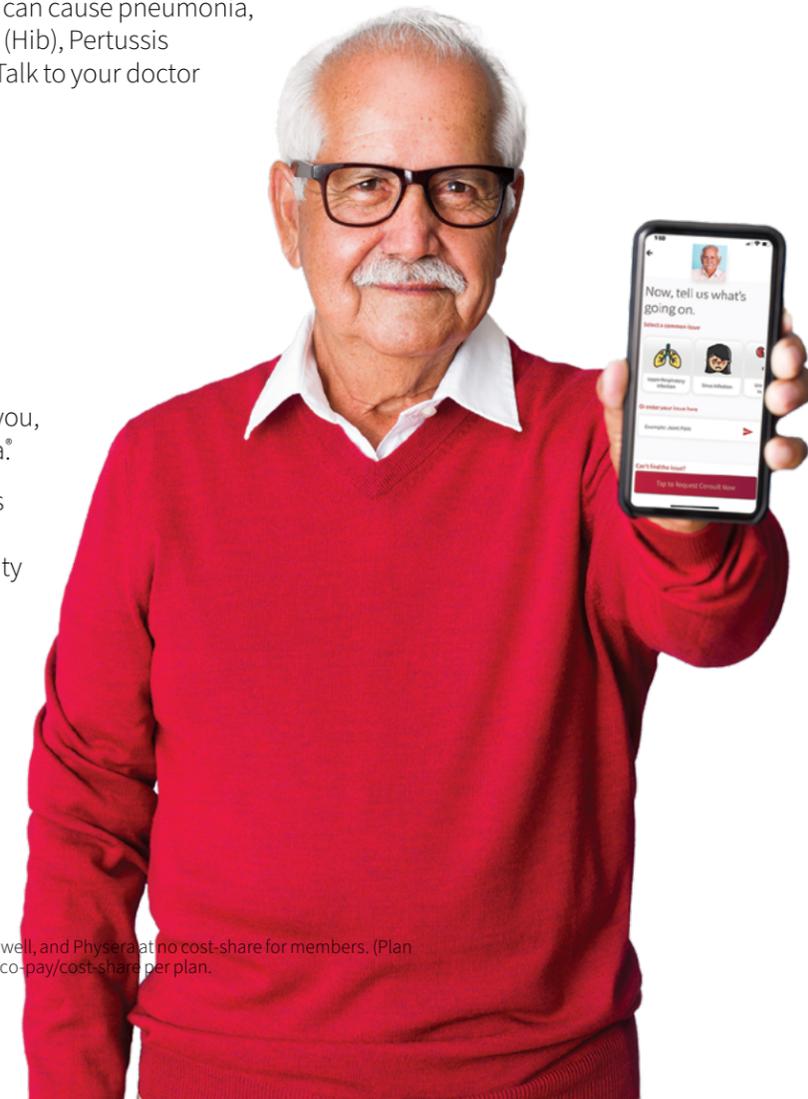
24/7 Urgent Care With No Wait

Urgent care appointments can be tough to get lately. High demand and fewer workers mean wait times are long—so urgent needs aren't always getting urgent treatment. For you, there's a simple solution: 24/7 Virtual Urgent Care with Gia.

Gia connects you to urgent care fast. In most cases, there's no wait at all. On top of that, Gia is free for MVP Members.* That means no co-pay, no bills—nothing. Just quick, quality care from wherever you are.



To get started, use your smartphone camera to view the QR code and visit StartWithGia.com.



Virtual care services from MVP Health Care are provided by UCM Digital Health, Amwell, and Phylera at no cost-share for members. (Plan exceptions may apply.) Members' direct or digital provider visits may be subject to co-pay/cost-share per plan.

LivingWell



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Go online and take charge of your health.

The MVP Healthwise® Knowledgebase is your one-stop resource for the latest health information. Visit mvphealthcare.com and select *Members*, then *Health & Wellness*.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

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Preventive care is the best care.

Health care screenings help prevent or find illnesses and diseases in their earlier stages when treatment is more effective. If you've put off your screenings, you're not alone, but now is the time to catch up. To find out if you are due for screenings, Sign In to your MVP online account at mvphealthcare.com/member and select *Preventive Care Reminders*, and talk to your doctor.

Living Well Programs

MVP offers a variety of classes and workshops—both in-person and virtual—to help you live well physically, emotionally, and otherwise! Find classes like chair moves, tai chi, meditation, or even quitting tobacco. To find a class that is right for you, visit mvphealthcare.com/LWCalendar. Filter by county to find the programs nearest you.

