

Neighborhood Chatter "sharing news neighbors can use"

Publication Date March 4, 2013

The Pain in Your Back

by Lee Manly, City of Garland Risk Management

There are many people who experience lower-back pain at some point, but a painful back can be excruciating. It causes pain that radiates along the path of the sciatic nerve, which provides feeling to your thighs, legs and feet. The pain can run from your back down your buttocks and legs and varies widely, from a mild ache to a sharp, burning sensation, sometimes accompanied by numbness, tingling or a pins-and-needles feeling.

A painful back may often go away on its own or with self-care actions, such as hot or cold packs, over- the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, stretching and other exercise. More severe symptoms may require actions such as prescription medications or physical therapy.

But the best solution for a backache is prevention:

- Exercise regularly, particularly the muscles of your abdomen and lower back, with activities, such as cycling or yoga.
- **Maintain** proper posture when you sit, making sure your hips are supported, and the edge of your chair doesn't press against the back of your thighs and knees. Avoid sitting on hard chairs, or consider using a "doughnut" cushion from a medical supply house.
- Lift with your legs, not your back, hold objects close to your body when carrying them and don't twist your spine when carrying heavy loads.
- Sleep on a good firm mattress.

Finally, avoid being a couch potato. Sitting for long periods of time, or having an inactive lifestyle can raise your risk of having back trouble. Call your health care provider if symptoms don't improve or if pain lasts longer than six weeks, is severe or gets increasingly worse.