

# What More Can I Do For My Aching Back?

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- 1. Spinal Manipulative Therapy (SMT) or manipulation:** This is usually done by chiropractors. Recommended by most Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) as one of the safest, effective and cost-effective treatments for back and neck pain. Getting manipulation is a good place to start if your back or neck hurts. Usually a couple of treatments a week for a couple of weeks will get you back to feeling good and functioning better. If you want to keep your spine healthy, get a manipulative treatment once a month—even if you don't have symptoms. We now have studies that show that SMT can prevent exacerbations of pain.
  - Manipulation increases the mobility of fixed spinal joints by breaking up adhesions in the joints—like breaking up rust in a hinge. The increased mobility can help pump excess fluid out of the joint thus reducing swelling and muscle spasm. Restoring motion to the spinal joint improves the influx of nutrients and the pumping out of waste products. When there is a disruption of synovial flow (because of the fixation), degeneration is accelerated.
- 2. Exercises:**
  - Exercises—stretching, balance (Yoga, Tai chi), cardiovascular, strength, stabilization (core). Go to You Tube and type in **23. 5 hours**. Enjoy this 9 minute video by Dr. Mike Evans entitled, **23 and 1/2 hours: What is the single best thing we can do for our health?**
  - Trigger point therapy/myofascial release—helps to break up muscle spasm and adhesions.
  - Electrical Muscle Stimulation—relaxes tight muscle, pain relief. TENS units (Transcutaneous Electrical Neuromuscular Stimulator) are available for home use—Prorelax TENS Therapy Pain Controller with Back Belt Model V29990.
  - Traction—stretches and relaxes tight muscle, mobilizes joint restriction. **Inversion table**—try it before you buy it. **Cervical traction units**
- 3. Ice/Heat therapy:**
  - **Ice—to be used when you have flare-ups of pain. 10-15 minutes of ice (every hour if needed).**
  - Heat—can be done daily to relax tight muscles.
- 4. Pressure point therapy or massage techniques** (tennis balls, baseballs, or softballs in a sock, vibrating massagers, etc)
  - To be done daily to dissipate the accumulating tension in the muscle—can be done at work, at home, in the car. I use the icy-hot lotion called **Sombra**, the **Omni Massage Rollers**, and the **Jeanie Rub single-speed massager**.
- 5. Over the counter (OTC) medication:** to be taken *temporarily* during the acute phase of a flare-up of pain.
  - Anti-inflammatories (to reduce swelling)—Advil or Motrin (Ibuprofen), Aleve (Naprosyn).
  - Pain relievers—Tylenol (Acetaminophen), **White Willow Bark** (contains salicin—similar to aspirin—helps to reduce fever and inflammation—used to treat headaches, back pain and osteoarthritis).
  - Natural anti-inflammatories: **Inflazyme**, omega-3 fish oils, flaxseed oil, arnica, ginger, turmeric, **Epsom Salt Bath**.
  - Natural muscle relaxant—**Valerin**, valerian root (natural sedation and anti-anxiety)—calming and relaxing effect. Magnesium: I use a product called **Natural Calm** every night. It is a natural muscle relaxant, sleep aid, and bowel stimulator.
- 6. Reduction of postural stresses** (change positions frequently, sit up straight, proper bending and lifting techniques). Take periodic breaks at work and do the pressure point therapy with the tennis balls and soft balls.
- 7. Reduction of emotional stresses** (exercise, relaxation techniques, counseling, biofeedback, prayer, etc.)
- 8. Supports** (cervical pillow, low back support, low back brace, heel lift, orthotics, good supporting shoes, mattress)
- 9. Anti-Inflammatory diet** (including adequate intake of water). Vitamin/Mineral supplementation.
- 10. CAM therapies:** acupuncture, massage
- 11. Stronger meds (steroids) or injections** (epidural steroid injections or trigger point injections)
- 12. Chronic Pain Management (bio feedback, behavioral health, opioids, TENS units)**
- 13. Surgery**