



Top Mistakes That Keep People in Pain

.....and what to do instead

1. Not Moving

One of the biggest mistakes we see is that when someone is in pain they try to stay as still as possible and not move.

We have to **move** our bodies or they will get stiffer and more sore, but the movement has to be gentle. It's a mistake to sit or lie down for long periods of time without movement. Instead, gentle movement keeps muscles from 'locking up' and hurting even more.

Here are some examples of gentle easy movements most of us can do regardless of our pain. Maybe you are thinking, "but I hurt too much to move;" what about if you gently move your head to look over your right shoulder, just an inch or two. Now left. Just a little bit of movement. Any movement will keep the body from being "locked up."

How about gently shrugging the shoulders? Go easy. We can bounce them up and down a little.

What about small circles with our hips? Hips side to side.

When we get too scared to move more, the best thing to do is to work with someone who is experienced to guide you and figure out exactly what is the correct movement for your individual situation and how much movement your body can tolerate.

2. Stretching too hard

We see this all the time. So many people stretch as much as they can thinking that it will help to get them loose. But it takes time to get muscles to release and loosen up, especially if they are in spasm. Think of a rubber band that's been in the freezer—you wouldn't think of pulling on it very hard or it might break. But when you pull it out as hard as you can it will stretch, then when you let go it snaps back to the same tight band. It is too severe to stretch so hard. Instead, **stretch to a 2 on a scale of 1-5**. Over time this will allow your muscles to relax and stretch out. Gentle stretching creates the desired results. Back pain especially gets worse not better if we try to stretch too much.



3. Holding our breath

I don't know why we do this, but it is so common. We hold our breath thinking that it will help to keep still and not hurt. Instead, it is necessary to **breathe**. Slow, deep breathing helps to oxygenate our systems which will help to relax our muscles. We need to breathe. There are proven benefits to getting more oxygen into our system but many do not realize how breathing can help with pain. Breathing not only brings us necessary oxygen but it also helps our bodies to relax.

Be sure that the out-breath is longer than the in-breath. That way, we do not hyperventilate while practicing deeper breathing.

Listen to your breathing throughout the day. IF you hear a big exhale sound, especially while doing any exercise or work, it means that you are holding your breath. The sound of breathing should be about the same for the inhale and exhale. We have a special audio CD that teaches you exactly how to do this if you want step-by-step instruction to deepen your breathing. Ask us about Breathing Deeper, the audio CD.

Some of the MANY benefits of breathing deeper include:

- Relaxation of the mind
- Relaxation of the body
- Relaxation of the muscles
- Enhances sports performance
- Enhances ANY performance - for cyclists, dancers, singers, basketball players, Administrative Assistants, CEO's
- Calmness
- Reduces anxiety
- Lowers heart rate
- Lowers blood pressure
- Enhances our ability to work and play and enjoy life to the fullest!
- Every aspect of physical and emotional health is positively affected by deeper breathing
- Enhances lung health, which is an indicator of our general health
- Enhances our general health
- Helps rid our bodies of toxins
- Lowers cancer risk
- Keeps sickness away
- Increases life span
- Speeds up injury repair
- Enhances healing ability



The deep low-belly breath is the most efficient breath. Ever watch a baby breathe? They breathe into the belly. Low belly breathing oxygenates our bodies quickly, calms the nervous system and aids digestion. It helps our mind stop circling in worry or panic mode. AND it energizes the whole body! All of these elements of breathing deeper help reduce pain.

4. Not drinking enough water

I get asked all the time, why? What difference will it make besides my having to go to the bathroom more often?

In between the vertebrae are discs. I like to think of the discs like sponges. If we put a sponge under a heavy encyclopedia it gets compressed. If we then add water to that sponge it will expand, sometimes many times over.

Our discs work the same way. Our bodies are 70% water. When we don't drink enough water, one of the places that loses water is our discs. This is part of the reason people lose height as they get older: their discs are compressing.

One of the things that helps the discs decompress is water!

Another reason to drink more water is the tight correlation between pain and water. Without implying causality here, studies show that people who drink more water have less pain and people who drink less water have more pain. If you understand correlation, two things that happen at the same time, this is one of the strongest correlations out there.

I see this with my clients. It's true that the ones who drink the most water have the least amount of pain and the ones in the most pain drink the least amount of water. This is NOT to say that drinking water alone will make your pain go away, although it might.

As an aside, arthritis pain is also made better by drinking more water. Believe it or not, many maladies of the body are made better just by drinking more water.

The **amount** of water to drink is half your body weight in ounces. That means if you weigh 150 pounds, you want to be drinking 75 ounces of water daily or a little more than 9 glasses of water.



There is yet another reason to drink more water as it relates to pain. That is, while we all know what pain FEELS like, we are hard pressed to define it. We know that signals are carried in the body by electrical conductance. One theory is that pain is what happens when there is not enough water to conduct the signal and the signal hits a break, or what is called an "open" in electricity, where it can't jump the gap and we experience pain as a result.

Be that as it may, this is some of the background reasoning behind why we want to be **drinking more water**.

5. Holding in our bellies

It's common to think that we are helping our posture by keeping a tight belly and a stiff back. However, if we hold our bellies in all the time the muscles are overworking. This causes tension in the body and can even cause a build-up of lactic acid. Instead, try standing tall keeping a relaxed belly. Muscles are meant to be fluid, soft, and flexible.

When the muscles are contracted all the time, they get shorter and therefore too tight. Think of women who wear high heels. The calf muscles get very short. One of the biggest causes of back pain is muscles that are too tight and short, like the calves or the belly!

Pulling the belly in and letting it go is a better way to work the muscle AND to make it stronger to support our backs (and for a leaner tummy appearance!) We can teach you exactly how to do this move and others to support your back.

Here's what one expert says: "The flat stomach myth is greatly perpetuated in our culture. Unfortunately, this habit creates havoc in the pelvic floor region and in our normal breathing patterns. In people who practice low-belly breathing regularly, the belly has a muscular look to it because these people have strong breathing muscles and are fully oxygenating their body with every breath. NOTHING decreases pain, tension and panic faster than deep, low-belly breathing."



6. Stretching evenly

In all fairness to you, this is what is taught by most modalities out there. Even in my trainings I have heard, “If you want the body to be even and aligned, then you have to work it evenly.”

However, this is **just** not true. Think about it: if our bodies are uneven to start with, and we stretch evenly on both sides, we end up with more stretched out yet still uneven muscles. This tighter side doesn’t catch up on its own. Instead, start on the side that is tighter, then go to the looser side and go back to the tighter side once more. If we stretch the same amount on both the tighter and looser sides there is no net difference; we get a little more stretched out but the tight side will still be tighter. If you **double stretch the tighter side** it makes all the difference!

I see this all the time in my clients. When I ask the ones who are slower to get better if they are spending more time on the tighter side, invariably the answer is no. When they start to implement this suggestion, real improvement begins.

When we think we are stretching evenly, we tend to go to what is most comfortable and stay longer. In other words, most of us tend to stretch the looser side more and the side that’s tighter and harder to stretch gets less time. This makes the disparity even worse, which is part of the cause of back pain.

Some people can’t figure out which is their tighter side. For many it depends on what muscle; maybe a person is tighter on the right side of their torso, but tighter on the left side in their legs. Having someone else verify by watching can be helpful. Ask us to help with this. This is part of our signature: helping people identify the imbalances that keep them in pain.

7. Stopping when the pain gets better

Understandably, most people who are in pain just want to be *out* of pain. During a pain episode it’s easy to remember to do stretches and moves to help. Then it gets better and often it seems that it’s not necessary to keep doing the moves. Then the pain returns and the cycle starts again.

Instead of only doing the work when the pain is present it is important to be consistent and keep doing the moves especially when we feel better and not just when we hurt! Just because the back doesn’t hurt it does not mean its better. While there are



gradations of pain, there are no gradations for no pain. It may take a while for the body to make permanent changes.

Here's an analogy that might help: Let's say we are sitting in a car in a blizzard that is buried in snow up past the window; there is no visibility. If we shovel the snow away from the window, we can now see out but we are still surrounded by snow and stuck. Healing the back is similar; just because we are out of pain does not mean we are fine. It's as if we are still surrounded by "snow". However, if we continue to do what got us better, i.e. continued work with our moves, that snow will melt in time. Our backs get stronger and more healing continues until gradually we are able to reduce the amount of time spent for our back and get to a point of maintenance.

A note from Dot:

We hope you have enjoyed this material and that it has been helpful to you.

Now that you know what **not** to do, would you like to learn exactly what you **do** need to do?

The proven way to get out of back pain is to work with a specialist to make sure that the moves you are doing are the exact right moves for you, done the exact correct way.

We are offering a limited number of free **Get Out of Pain** Strategy Sessions – telephone consultations – that are a great way to get in touch with exactly where you are, where you want to be and what is the most effective way to get you there.

If you are ready to get rid of your back pain for good, I invite you to act on this limited time offer.

Email us at: dot@getoutofbackpain.com and tell us briefly what is going on with your back. We'll get back to you.

To pain-free! You really CAN feel better,

Dot

