

How To Cure Your Back Pain Overnight

BACKGROUND

Disclaimer: Back pain can occur for a variety of reasons, some requiring urgent and immediate care. Do not use this information in the place of proper medical evaluation and care from qualified medical provider.

Causes of back pain: Back pain can be caused by anything from kidney stones to muscle strain and cancer to a fractured vertebrae. Before using any of the information in this document you should have a thorough examination to determine the root cause of your back pain.

As an acupuncturist, most of the patients I see typically have back pain associated with, but not limited to, one or more of the following;

- arthritis
- car accident or traumatic injury
- fall or misstep
- over use of specific activities
- scoliosis/poor posture
- sitting/driving for extended periods of time
- disk fractures, herniations, degenerative changes or abnormalities
- post surgical trauma
- obesity
- medication side effects
- unknown origin

Examination by an allopathic physician is always recommended, especially to get imaging studies, like X-ray, MRI or CT scans. Although scans may not identify a specific cause of the pain, they can often rule out things that may require emergency surgery or specific treatments (like cancer). Once other sources of pain are ruled out a doctor's treatment recommendations may include a 6-week course of NSAIDS, cortisone shots, referrals for massage, physical therapy, acupuncture and/or in some cases neurological evaluations. The approach is usually try the least invasive thing first then continue with more invasive options if the pain does not go away.

Examination by an acupuncturist involves identifying the location of the pain, the channels involved, range of motion limitations, and the conditions that trigger and alleviate the pain. Assessment by a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioner may lead to a diagnosis of one or more of the following patterns of disharmony:

- Qi and Blood Stagnation
- Ki Yin/Yang Deficiency
- Cold Damp With Painful Obstruction
- Bi Syndrome

Regardless of the channels and pattern causing the pain, TCM employs a simple treatment strategy based on the idea that **all pain is caused by stagnation (poor circulation) and**

therefore removing the stagnation (increasing circulation), eliminates the pain and promotes healing.

Acupuncture is the method used to increase circulation in the specific channels that are stagnant. When energy and blood flow are returned to the diseased part of the body/back, then true healing can occur.

That is, unless there's something else getting in the way of this healing circulation.

Whatever type of treatment you are receiving, it will not provide lasting (or any) benefit if you are restricting circulation to the area of the back that is in need of healthy blood, oxygen, energy, nourishment, etc.

Unfortunately many people with back pain are unknowingly preventing their back pain from getting better.

If you like to sleep on your sides or on your stomach then there's a good chance you're causing your back pain to get worse or not improve.

Why?

Because how you position your body while you sleep can either promote circulation or prevent circulation.

Remember that according to Traditional Chinese Medicine, healing occurs when stagnation is removed and circulation returns. So if acupuncture is successful in restoring circulation and relieving back pain, but every night you sleep in such a way that your body re-patterns the stagnation, then your pain will return.

How To Cure Your Back Pain Overnight

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Remove the pillow from your bed**, lay down flat on your back so your head is on the mattress. Let your arms rest alongside your body with your palms facing up or down, whichever is most comfortable.
2. Place the pillow (or several pillows depending on comfort level) under your knees. Giving the knees a slight bend takes pressure off the lower back without adding weight to the spine.
3. Take a few deep breaths.
4. This may be the first time in ages that your neck has been in vertical alignment (on the same horizontal plane) as the rest of your spine. Laying down without a pillow under your head can cause your sinuses to drain slightly differently. Don't worry, it's not a bad thing. It just might make you feel strange, even dizzy at first. Often the sinuses will open up and you'll notice you can breathe more easily. Some people even report that they snore less in this position.
5. If you want a little support for your neck, roll up a hand towel and place that underneath the curve. Be sure it is not pressing up on your neck. This little bit of support can also help to prevent your head from twisting to one side.
6. Again, take a few deep breaths.
7. **Allow yourself to lay in this position for at least 5 minutes.** After 5 minutes, remove the towel under your neck and replace it with your pillow and give yourself permission to get into whatever position is most comfortable to sleep. Sleep in the most important thing and we are not trying to interrupt your sleep.
8. However, if you should wake up during the night, to go to the bathroom or change positions, repeat the process by removing your pillow, placing in under your knees and laying on your back "for 5 minutes". After 5 minutes, take the pillow from under your knees and put it under your head and give yourself permission to get into whatever position is most comfortable to sleep.
9. When it's time to get up in the morning, lay on your back for 5 minutes as described above. Take deep breaths and feel your neck and spine, shoulders and hips in perfect alignment. If you wake to an alarm, set the clock 5 minutes early and hit the snooze button so you can easily remember to do this each morning before you start your day.

How To Cure Your Back Pain Overnight

HOW IT WORKS

Laying on your back allows for blood, oxygen and energy to circulate unobstructed to all parts of your spine and limbs. Because your whole body is on the same horizontal plane, your heart can more easily circulate blood to your back and limbs without fighting gravity.

In fact, **gravity is now a force working in your favor**. It is gently applying “pressure” by evenly pulling all your back muscles toward the bed. Your shoulders are able to easily relax back (instead of roll forward) in a position that aligns your posture.

Contrast that with what gravity is doing when you lay on your side. First, your body weight compresses muscles, nerves, lymph glands, blood vessels, and other tissues on the side you’re laying on, which interrupts circulation to those areas, especially your hip and shoulder. And then to circulate blood to your opposite side of your body, your circulatory system has to fight gravity.

The joints at your hip and shoulder are especially affected. If you ever wake up with your arms or hands numb, this is an indication that circulation is being compromised, either from compression (if it is the shoulder you are laying on) or from gravity (if it’s the opposite arm). This interruption in blood flow makes it difficult for healing blood/energy to circulate in these areas.

Additionally your spine is twisted just enough to put uneven pressure at different points along your spine. This is true if you are sleeping on your stomach too. Depending on the position of your legs and arms, the pressure may be most in your spine at your neck (cervical vertebrae), scapula (thoracic vertebrae), or low back (lumbar vertebrae). If you’ve had an injury to one of these areas then it is even more crucial to prevent stagnation from occurring.

So even if you have a wonderful acupuncture treatment that restores circulation to the muscles, nerves and surrounding tissue in your back, if you sleep on your sides or stomach at night, you are making it very difficult for your body to keep the healing circulation open. In some cases you may be actually causing your back pain simply by laying in a position that prevents circulation and twists your spine.

By laying flat on your back (with only a minor elevation of your knees) you now have gravity working in your favor and your entire spine in perfect alignment.

The reason you are trying to do this each night “for 5 minutes” is to give yourself the greatest chance at success. If I told said you had to sleep on your back every night for the rest of your life, most people would say, no way, I can’t do that!”. But anyone can lay on their back for 5 minutes (except in rare circumstances where it is contraindicated, which is why it is important to see your doctor before doing this).

Of course the idea is that eventually you might fall asleep and lay in this healing position for more than 5 minutes. I know many patients who were lifelong stomach sleepers (which is awful for neck pain) and swore there was no way they could ever sleep on their back. And after just a couple of nights they find they are able to sleep through the entire night on their backs. And lo and behold, not only does their neck pain go away, but their headaches go away too!