

Tips on How to Lessen the Impact of Low Back Pain and Sciatica



the manual touch
PHYSICAL THERAPY

Reclaim Movement, Function and Life

By: Denise Schwartz, PT, CMT, CAFS, CFGS



About Denise Schwartz

The Manual Touch Physical Therapy opened in August of 2010, providing a whole body approach to health using both traditional and nontraditional PT practices. Denise Schwartz, Owner and Founder, fully believes this is the best approach to facilitating each patient's ability to overcome pain and achieve a higher quality of life.

Denise began her career working in a Level 1 trauma hospital for 14 years in the outpatient area, treating a variety of orthopedic and neurological patients. Having taken more than 5,000 continuing education hours to further her PT knowledge in manual therapy, spinal care, running and functional rehabilitation (rehab), Denise is certified and extensively trained in Integrative Manual Therapy (IMT).

Expanding her patient reach and impact, Denise then went on to start CenterIMT Chicago. As part owner of three CenterIMT clinics, she organized numerous IMT courses and mentored other IMT therapists in the methods she has mastered to provide the best results for her patients.

Denise has assisted at many manual therapy classes and has taught myofascial release and therapeutic taping to other physical therapists at continuing education courses.

Denise began running later in life which quickly became a passion. Despite multiple injuries common in older runners, she has gone on to complete numerous half marathons and her first full marathon in 2015.

Specialties

- Whole Body Approach
- Functional Rehab
- Myofascial Release
- Integrative Manual therapy
- Cranial therapy
- Spinal conditions
- Kinesiotaping
- Running Injury Recovery/Prevention
- Balance/Vestibular rehab



9 Things You Can Do for Low Back Pain and Sciatica

Physical therapists typically treat lower back pain (LBP) or sciatica (pain, numbness, or tingling down the back of the leg) that are caused by one of the following: spinal stenosis or arthritis, a herniated lumbar disc or a sacroiliac (SI) dysfunction. LBP may also stem from a variety of other medical conditions such as a tumor, cancer, or poor kidney function. Treatment for LBP and Sciatica is best done with the partnership of a medical professional who understands the different treatments for each diagnosis to ensure the right solution is in place to relieve your suffering. However, here are some generic tips that could make you more comfortable until you seek out medical intervention.

1. Take a Stand

Engaging the lower abdominals helps support the back. Use these simple tricks to find muscles you didn't know you had:

- Place tongue on the back of top teeth and make the “thhh” sound. Hold for 5 seconds, rest 5 seconds and repeat 10x; complete this series morning and night. Use this trick throughout your day.
- Stand with feet close together, rock forward to balls of feet and back towards the heel, moving from the ankles not the hips; repeat this trick several times daily.

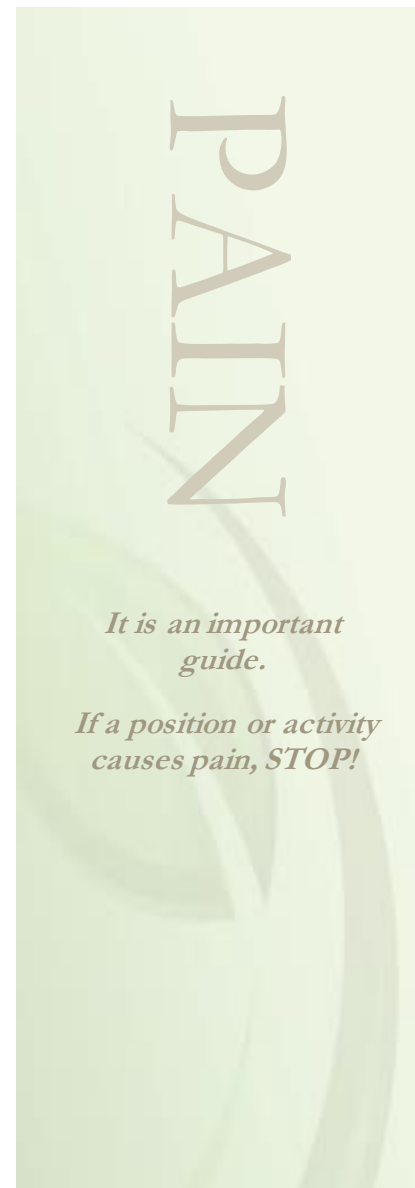
2. “Sit Up!”

Traditional advice from the time you were small rears its ugly head again. Try these tips to regain your posture and improve sitting comfort.

- Place your knees lower than hips, a wedge under can help!
- Use a lumbar support pad behind the small of your back to support the normal curvature of the spine and promote proper posture.
- Choose a firm chair over something mushy that will compromise the position of your back.
- Keep feet flat on the floor; do not cross your legs.

Sitting the majority of your day will set you up for a boatload of issues as outlined in this great infographic:

<https://goo.gl/pxZW4b>



3. Sensible Footwear

The description alone raises images of shoes that might have been worn by your favorite older relative or clergy leader once upon a day, but today's fashions make sensible far more fashionable while still keeping your posture "in line." Save the flip flops for the sand and the high heels for a sit-down date with door-to-door valet service. Everything in between should have solid arch support and be secure on the foot.

4. How Low Can You Go?

However far it is....

- Avoid bending and turning at the waist.
- Hinge at the hips by sticking your backside back and then bend the knees.
- Or, skip bending all together and use a "grabber" to pick things up from the floor.

5. Heat Up or Cool Down?

First, identify if the pain is new or ongoing. New pain or an acute episode or returning pain calls for ice on the lower back 10-20 min rotating an on/off cycle for up to an hour 1-2 times daily. After 2-3 days, switch to heat in the same intervals. However, if you prefer cold over hot, then stick with the ice, as ice can be used at any time in the healing process. Unfortunately, neither will cure back pain but may lessen the discomfort.

6. Brace Yourself

Something as natural as a sneeze or a cough can actually strain sciatica and LBP. Whenever possible, wrap your arms around the belly to support your mid-section when you feel a sneeze or cough coming on.

7. Maximize Your "Z's"

Sleeping is a time for the body to rest, recover and heal. Use these positions for the biggest bang for your sleeping buck.

- Sleep on your back with one or more pillows under your thighs.
- Sleep on your side with a medium size pillow between your legs; one side may be better than the other.
- Avoid tummy sleeping.
- Mattresses should be firm with enough cushioning to support the natural curves of the body.

8. Keep on Movin'

More often than not, movement, such as walking, will be helpful over complete rest. Pool walking is an effective substitute to lessen the effects of gravity while still providing resistance. Remember, if you experience an increase in pain with any activity, STOP!



9. Physical Therapy

If your pain is persistent and to prevent another LBP episode, get in to see a physical therapist sooner than later, as pain relief will be quicker with PT intervention, as opposed to just rest or just medications. Your physical therapy should be a combination of manual therapy, exercise, and education.

Recent research from *JAMA Internal Medicine* states that exercise or a combination of exercise and education work the best in preventing LBP. According to a study by BMC Health Services Research, early physical therapy intervention for LBP will significantly lower ultimate healthcare costs by reducing the use of expensive treatments such as spinal surgery, injections, imaging and pain medications.

In much of the US a person can see a PT without seeing their doctor first, but here in Illinois, you will need to go to your doctor first in order to get a prescription for PT.

Implications of early and guideline adherent physical therapy for low back pain on utilization and costs, *BMC Health Services Research* 201515:150 <http://goo.gl/fdr021>



If you want to share your story or have questions about your low back pain or sciatica please email me, I'd love to hear from you: DeniseS@themanualtouch.com

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