

A photograph of an older man and woman embracing outdoors. The man has grey hair and a beard, wearing a blue button-down shirt. The woman has short blonde hair and glasses, wearing an orange sweater. They are both smiling warmly. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

Walking Away from your

NAGGING BACK PAIN

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INSIDE:

- FIXING YOUR STRIDE
- EXERCISE ESSENTIALS
- TRY THIS RECIPE!
- FREE TELEHEALTH CONSULTATION



Walking Away from your

NAGGING BACK PAIN

Does going for a walk sound like a big pain in the back? For those who struggle with chronic back pain, even the basic task of going for a walk can be overwhelming and painful. Back pain can strike at any time. Whether in the upper back, surrounding the neck and shoulders, or in the lower back at the lumbar or sciatica, back pain is something that no one likes to deal with for too long.

Relying on pain medications to help you overcome back pain will leave you disappointed. While pain medications are frequently helpful at alleviating the discomfort of your back pain for a short period of time, they are not capable of resolving the issue that is causing your pain to develop in the first place. The only thing that can actually fix your back pain is addressing the issue that is causing your pain head on. Physical therapy is a great resource for addressing your back pain and can be a helpful tool in getting you back on your feet.

So, whether it is following a sudden injury or a chronic issue that has developed over time, physical therapy could be the answer to helping you enjoy life free of back pain. And the secret to success is learning to approach recovery one step at a time.

Walking your Way Pain Free

Walking is a great form of exercise, but more than that, it is a necessity of life. When you can't walk, even basic tasks become complicated. Getting out of bed in the morning, getting to and from work, moving your way around the office, and even spending time with family on the weekends all rely heavily on your ability to walk. When your back pain begins to interfere with your ability to move around freely, then you know it is time to start doing something about it.

Conveniently, walking is more than a goal when it comes to back pain—it could be part of the solution. Working with a physical therapist to develop improved strategies and techniques with your walking could help you to get back on your feet even sooner than you thought possible. What's more, for those who are able to walk, getting on your feet more often with targeted exercises could help you find relief from back pain even sooner than expected.



FIXING YOUR STRIDE

When you are experiencing regular back pain—especially if you are experiencing back pain while walking—you should consider ways that you can reduce back pain by taking small steps to support your back. There are several things that you can do at home to improve your stride, which can make a significant difference when it comes to managing back pain day-to-day.

Here are several ways that you can start taking care of your back with each step you take:

1. Make sure that you are wearing the right types of shoes. While the golden rule for walking is to wear sneakers, not all sneakers are created equally. You need to wear a sneaker that is going to provide you with the arch support that meets your individual needs. This may mean upgrading from your minimal support sneaker to something more athletically designed.

2. There are many easy ways to strengthen your feet in your free time. You can walk barefoot on the beach. You can try picking up small items with your toes, such as a face cloth, marbles, or markers. Curling your toes and flexing your feet in the morning before you get out of bed are also great ways to make your feet stronger as well.

3. Work on improving your posture. If you are slouching when you walk, then that may be impacting the way that your back feels. Take a few minutes in the morning and again in the afternoon to stretch your back, and then make a point of keeping your shoulders square and your back straight as you walk. Simply standing tall may alleviate some of your back pain.

Another way that walking can help alleviate back pain is by encouraging weight loss. Being overweight puts added pressure on your back, and this can contribute to increased back pain. Working with a physical therapist to improve your walking technique can help you to overcome back pain one step at a time.

EXERCISE ESSENTIALS

Try this movement to relieve pain.

SWAN DIVE

Lay on stomach with your arms overhead. Press your chest upwards, keeping the muscles in your trunk and legs relaxed. Repeat 6 times.



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Always consult your physical therapist or physician before starting exercises you are unsure of doing.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT

CARA CURRAN PT, DPT

Cara Curran PT, DPT graduated from Sacred Heart University from the Accelerated Doctorate of Physical Therapy Program. Cara joins Elliott Physical Therapy with a strong sense of teamwork as a former NCAA Division 1 Athlete on the Sacred Heart Women's Ice Hockey Team. Cara Curran began her career as a Physical Therapist in Boston at a level one trauma center treating patients in the inpatient setting on oncology, cardiology, trauma/emergency medicine, and transplant units. She has presented at the Massachusetts American Physical Therapy Association's Annual Conference on her work as a member of the Liver and Bone Marrow Transplant Units at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Cara enjoys running, hiking, skiing, and petting other people's dogs. On weekends she continues to actively treat patients at Spaulding Rehabilitation Center on the Brain Injury Unit as well as train for upcoming marathons. When she isn't at work you can find Cara at Brewed Awakenings or in her hammock somewhere outside.

Cara Curran PT, DPT currently treats patients Monday through Friday in our Hingham clinic. You can reach Cara by calling 781-875-1913 or by email cara@elliottphysicaltherapy.com to schedule your appointment with her today.



TRY THIS RECIPE! SLOW-COOKER VEGETARIAN LASAGNA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large egg
- 15-16-oz part-skim ricotta
- 5 oz package baby spinach, coarsely chopped
- 3 large portobello mushroom caps, gills removed, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 small zucchini, quartered and sliced
- 28 oz can crushed tomatoes
- 28 oz can diced tomatoes
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pinch crushed red pepper
- 12oz whole-wheat lasagna noodles
- 3 cups shredded part-skim mozzarella

DIRECTIONS:

Combine egg, ricotta, spinach, mushrooms and zucchini in a large bowl. Combine crushed and diced tomatoes and their juice, garlic and crushed red pepper (if using) in a medium bowl. Generously coat a 6-quart or larger slow cooker with cooking spray. Spread 1 1/2 cups of the tomato mixture in the slow cooker. Arrange 5 noodles over the sauce. Spread half of the ricotta-vegetable mixture over the noodles and firmly pat down, then spoon on 1 1/2 cups sauce and sprinkle with 1 cup mozzarella. Repeat the layering one more time, starting with noodles. Top with a third layer of noodles. Evenly spread the remaining tomato sauce over the noodles. Set aside the remaining 1 cup mozzarella in the refrigerator. Put the lid on the slow cooker and cook on High for 2 hours. Turn off the slow cooker, sprinkle the reserved mozzarella on the lasagna, cover and let stand for 10 minutes to melt the cheese.

Recipe: <http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/252492/slow-cooker-vegetarian-lasagna/>

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