How to Prevent Back Pain

- **Watch how and where you sleep.** Mattresses should be supportive. Avoid sleeping on your stomach, as it puts pressure on your back. Instead, sleep on your back or side.
- **Exercise regularly.** Strengthening your muscles and core reduces strain on your back, so incorporate exercise into your daily routine.
- **Maintain good posture.** Slouching exaggerates the natural curves in your back and can lead to muscle fatigue and injury.
- **Avoid heavy lifting.** If you need to lift something heavy, let your legs do the work. Bend your knees and keep your back straight when you lift.
- **Wear good shoes.** High heels and worn-out shoes may contribute to back pain. Wear supportive shoes that are in good condition.
- **Relax.** Stress can cause muscle tension and create pain in the back and neck. Try meditation or relaxation techniques to alleviate stress.
- **Stop smoking.** As if there weren’t enough reasons to ditch the habit, the *American Journal of Medicine* found that smokers were more likely to suffer from lower-back pain than nonsmokers.

When to See a Doctor

- If a trauma such as a fall or an accident caused your back pain
- If numbness or tingling accompany your back pain
- If you have loss of bladder or bowel function in addition to your back pain
- If pain is excruciating
- If pain doesn’t go away within three to four days