



# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Back Pain: After Your Child's Visit

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Back pain has many possible causes. It is often related to problems with muscles and ligaments of the back. It may also be related to problems with the nerves, discs, or bones of the back. Moving, lifting, standing, sitting, or sleeping in an awkward way can strain the back. Sometimes children do not notice the injury until later.

Although it may hurt a lot, back pain usually improves on its own within several weeks. Most children recover in 12 weeks or less. Using good home treatment and being careful not to stress the back can help your child feel better sooner.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

### How can you care for your child at home?

- Have your child sit or lie in positions that are most comfortable and reduce your child's pain. Your child can try one of these positions when he or she lies down. Have your child:
  - Lie on his or her back with knees bent and supported by large pillows.
  - Lie on the floor with his or her legs on the seat of a sofa or chair.
  - Lie on his or her side with knees and hips bent and a pillow between the legs.
  - Lie on his or her stomach if it does not make pain worse.
- Do not let your child sit up in bed. Your child should also avoid soft couches and twisted positions. Bed rest can help relieve pain at first, but it delays healing. Avoid bed rest after the first day.

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- Have your child change positions every 30 minutes. If your child must sit for long periods of time, have him or her take breaks from sitting. Have your child get up and walk around or lie in a comfortable position.
- For the first 2 or 3 days, put ice or cold packs on your child's back for 10 to 20 minutes at a time, several times a day. (Put a thin cloth between the ice pack and your child's skin.) This reduces pain.
- After the first 2 or 3 days, you may use a warm pack or heating pad on your child's back for 20 minutes at a time. Hot showers will also help. Hot baths may help as long as your child can lie or sit in a position that does not stress his or her back. You may also keep using ice on your child's back if it helps.
- Give pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave your child a prescription medicine for pain, give it as prescribed.
  - If your child is not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if your child can take an over-the-counter medicine.
  - Do not give your child two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
  - Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- Have your child take short walks several times a day. Your child can start with 5 to 10 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day, and work up to longer walks. Your child should stick to level surfaces and avoid hills and stairs until his or her back is better.
- Have your child return to activities as soon as he or she can. Continued rest without activity is usually not good for your child's back.
- To prevent future back pain, ask your doctor about exercises your child can do to stretch and strengthen his or her back and stomach. Teach your child how to use good posture, safe lifting techniques, and proper body mechanics.

## When should you call for help?

**Call 911** anytime you think your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Your child loses bladder or bowel control when this has not been a problem before.
- Your child suddenly cannot walk or stand.
- Your child has sudden numbness or weakness in both legs.

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your child has new pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness, especially in the buttocks, genital or rectal area, legs, or feet.
- Your child has symptoms of a urinary infection. For example:
  - Your child has blood or pus in his or her urine.
  - Your child has pain in the back just below the rib cage. This is called flank pain.
  - Your child has a fever, chills, or body aches.
  - Your child has pain when he or she urinates.
  - Your child has groin or belly pain.

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your child's back pain gets worse or more frequent.
- Your child's back pain is not better after 1 week of home treatment. It may take a lot longer for the pain to go away completely, but it should feel at least a little better.

## Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter G758 in the search box to learn more about "**Back Pain: After Your Child's Visit**".

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