

# **9 Quick and Easy Ways to Minimize and Prevent Back Pain...**

**Without taking pain meds or  
making an appointment  
to see your doctor!**

**By JJ Flentke, PT MPH DPT CEEAA**



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## About the Author

JJ Flentke PT DPT, has been sought after for more than 25 years by people who want and need effective physical therapy as they face the challenges of aging. JJ has helped countless seniors keep their function at its best with the added focus of helping them stay in their homes. JJ has devoted the last 15 years to understanding neurological and balance/vestibular challenges in aging people, and thus she has become a specialist in treating people with Parkinson's Disease, MS, Stroke and Traumatic Brain Injury.

JJ and her team will help you maintain your independence whether that means traveling the world or staying in your own home and avoiding the assisted living facility.

When JJ opened Boomerang Therapy Works it's every detail was designed with people in mind. From the open design, the equipment, the atmosphere and color, to the staff, everyone and everything speaks to the goal of keeping Boomerang patients at their best. JJ wanted a lot of windows for better lighting, plants to optimize the health of the air quality, and a gym like atmosphere that exudes health. At Boomerang you are dealing with a chronic condition, A.G.E., in a healthy environment, you are NOT BROKEN. As a result, JJ has quickly become the authority, sought after by patients who come because their doctors, their families and their peers are all saying, go to Boomerang. Boomerang can help you thrive!

## **9 Quick and Easy Ways to Minimize and Prevent Back Pain (and Stiffness) Without Painkillers!!!!**

### **1. Stand up and bend backwards after you lift something/transfer someone!**

We humans spend too much of our day bending over!!!! As caregivers we are constantly putting on shoes, picking things up off the ground and transferring/helping our people. All of this requires us to bend forward, a lot. Bending backwards in a gentle stretch will help you keep your back in tip-top shape and ready for the next task.

### **2. Avoid Sitting for more than 20 minutes at a time.**

You and I were not designed to sit for long periods. When sitting, we create a slump of flexion in our lower back and thus strain. How often do you get up feeling stiff after sitting for a long period of time? A simple prevention for this is to sit for no more than 5-10 minutes at a time, get up and walk and stretch before sitting again. Pause the movie...get yourself a glass of water...hit play...and don't slump while sitting...

### **3. ICE VS HEAT**

**Ice** is by far the best way to ease **back pain**. Apply for 10-15 minutes at a time, make sure to protect your skin to avoid a burn, and if you can put a little weight on the ice pack the effects will go even deeper! **Heat** is better saved for **muscle stiffness and spasms** and I find that the best way to make a hot pack is: put 5-6 cups of uncooked rice in a pillow case and microwave for 2-3 minutes, depending on the microwave strength. Please be careful to check the heat level, and always protect your skin by placing a towel between it and the hot pack.

### **4. Wear Sensible Footwear**

Wearing heels (that includes cowboy boots), flip flops, and shoes that do not fit well enough all contribute to back pain. If you can avoid, please, please do!!!! We live in the Pacific Northwest, it is casual here!

### **5. Avoid Sitting Cross Legged**

Your spine is not designed to twist or turn and hold for an extended period and sitting cross legged puts a torque through your spine. This torque will create twisted joints, stretched muscle and an increased vulnerability to injury.

#### **6. Sleep With a Pillow Between Your Knees**

This may feel a bit odd at first, but if you can persist, it will lower the twist/rotation through your spine. This is the same as sitting cross-legged. So, if you sleep on your side, try a pillow between your legs from your knee to your ankle to keep your spine aligned. It helps to have the pillow go the whole length of your leg to reduce a twist through your hip.

#### **7. Change your Mattress every 5 years**

This is the bedroom question I hear almost every day! People want to know.... What is the best mattress? How often should I get it changed? The best mattress is a very subjective question....too hard, too soft or is it just right? Goldilocks had to test them out and so will you! The key is taking your time and laying a long time on many mattresses!

#### **8. Avoid sleeping on your stomach**

The problem with sleeping on your stomach is that either your back is all twisted up or your neck, so sleeping on your stomach, especially as we get past 40, may create more and more pain.

#### **9. Use proper lifting techniques:**

- a. Use your legs.
- b. Keep the arch in your back.
- c. Keep your feet apart!
- d. If it seems too heavy, it probably is too heavy, get someone to help!
- e. Pushing is easier than pulling
- f. Do not Twist
- g. Think it through before you move it!

**Bonus: Have a 1:1 Consult with a Physical Therapist.** If you want to learn about the nature of your back pain, how to minimize it, how to function better, and get on with your life see our physical therapist. Treatment from a Physical therapist means that you will get treatment that will loosen and sooth your tight muscles, loosen and lubricate stiff, stuck and painful joints, and then strengthen your whole body. Your PT will show you how to move better so that you can get back to doing the things you love to do! Your physical therapist also specializes in teaching you ways to prevent a reoccurrence of your pain and injury!!!!

**If you are interested in learning more, please feel free to schedule a free discovery visit and meet Trent Corey, PT DPT (Our Back Specialist) Just call us at 360-258-1637**

### **HEALTH ADVICE DISCLAIMER**

We make every effort to ensure that we accurately represent the injury advice and prognosis displayed throughout this guide.

However, examples of injuries and their prognosis are based on typical representations of those injuries that we commonly see in our physical therapy clinics. The information given is not intended as a representation of every individual's potential injury. As with any injury, each person's symptoms can vary widely and each person's recover from injury can also vary depending upon background, genetics, previous medical history, application of exercises, posture, motivation to follow physical therapy advice and various other physical factors.

It is impossible to give a 100% complete accurate diagnosis and prognosis without a thorough physical examination and likewise the advice given for management of an injury cannot be deemed fully accurate in the absence of this examination from Boomerang Therapy Works.

If any of these suggestions increases your discomfort or pain please contact your physical therapist.