

Help! My Back Hurts Whenever I Travel



People who travel have discovered through painful experience that the spine was not designed for long hours of sitting. Too often, the hours spent in a plane or car can result in an aching back the next day. But there are steps you can take before, during and after travel to reduce back pain.

First, travel light. It is better to take two small suitcases, weighing no more than 20 pounds each, instead of one large one. Invest in a neck or lumbar roll to support your spine and keep it from twisting into unnatural positions. And ask us about exercises you can do in public while traveling.

During your travel, break lifting into several stages, and never lift and pivot at the same time. If you have forgotten a support pillow, make one from a rolled-up sweatshirt, towel or blanket. A lumbar roll should be large enough to comfortably fill in the space between the small of your back and the seat. While waiting in line or sitting, perform the exercises we have suggested, and every 20 to 30 minutes, get up and walk around. Pay attention to your posture, too, to keep the back correctly aligned.

At the end of the trip, perform stretching exercises before grabbing your bag off the baggage carousel or unloading the car. Sudden lifting after inactivity can cause back injury. Then, when you get to your room, lie face down on the floor with a pillow under your chest for a few minutes. This will extend your back and help counteract pressures from sitting. A large plastic bag takes up no space in your luggage and can be filled with ice and wrapped in a towel to make an ice pack if your back hurts.

Simple precautions before, during and after your trip can prevent travel aches and pains that can ruin your vacation. We can give you specific exercises that will make your travel experience more comfortable and more pleasurable.