



SPINE CARE

A helpful guide with exercises and expert tips



**SUMMIT
ORTHOPEDICS**

Summit Orthopedics provides comprehensive bone, joint, and muscle care to the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota.

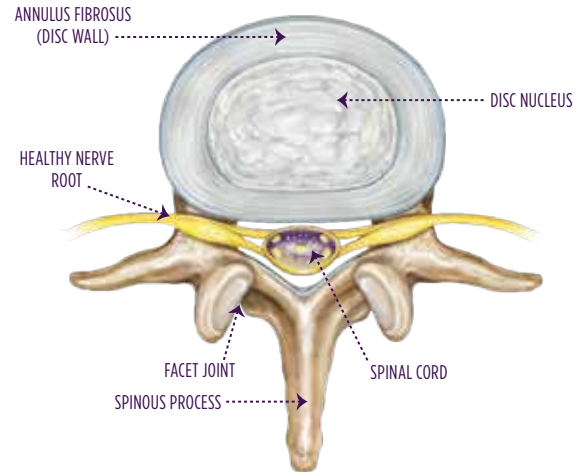
Summit's integrated multidisciplinary spine team diagnoses back and neck problems with a nonsurgical approach. We use focused exercises, activity modification, specialized physical therapy, biofeedback, and guided injections.

If nonsurgical treatments fail to support your lifestyle goals, fellowship-trained spine surgeons are here to consult with you and discuss appropriate surgical options.

About
SUMMIT ORTHOPEDICS

SPINE ANATOMY

The vertebrae of the spine are separated by discs. Each healthy disc has a cushioning center surrounded by a tough band of cartilage tissue.



AN INTERDEPENDENT SYSTEM:

- » 33 vertebrae
- » 100+ joints
- » 120 muscles
- » 23 discs
- » 220+ ligaments

When something goes wrong, hundreds of nerve fibers and countless nerve endings quickly alert you.

The flexibility of our spine enables us to engage in the work and leisure activities we enjoy.





Tools to Better Care for Yourself

- » **MODIFIED REST.** Remain active and choose exercise that does not make your symptoms worse. Inactivity for an extended period of time is not a good idea, and may even make it more difficult to recover.
- » **MEDICATION.** Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs can relieve swelling and provide temporary pain relief. Studies suggest that Ibuprofen provides better relief from inflammation-related back and neck pain.
- » **ICE AND HEAT.** If pain flares up right after activity, use an ice pack to reduce swelling. If achy soreness persists over time, or if you wake up with sore muscles, apply a heating pad to help ease muscle tightness.
- » **MASSAGE.** Massage therapy for persistent low back pain has been shown to reduce the need for painkillers by providing temporary pain relief. Massage can be an effective treatment to reduce stress, pain, and muscle tension.
- » **MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT.** Extra weight puts increased stress on the structures of the spine. You can set your own weight-loss goals or get nutrition guidance from Summit's wellness dietitian.



A Healthier Spine Through Exercise

When our back hurts, exercise is often low on our priority list. In many cases, back pain can be resolved—and future episodes prevented—with exercises designed to strengthen your neck and back and make it more flexible.

Guided movement distributes nutrients into the disc space and soft tissues supporting the spine. For a healthy back, routine exercise can help you avoid a stiff or weak spine.

Exercises focused on spine health include:

- » **STRETCHING:** Focus on muscles, ligaments, and tendons in the back, legs, buttock, and around the spine.
- » **STRENGTHENING:** Prevent or minimize back injuries or relieve back pain.
- » **CONDITIONING:** Increase your heart rate, encourage blood flow to spine area, and ease pain-causing stiffness with low-impact aerobic exercise.

Our therapists brought together simple exercises you can do at home to help manage and, in many cases, resolve neck pain or back soreness. This guide does not replace a physician consultation or treatment plan. These exercises are beneficial for most people, but discontinue any exercise if you experience pain when performing it. Review the information on page 27 on when to see a spine specialist or seek emergency care.

RETRACTION | CHIN TUCK

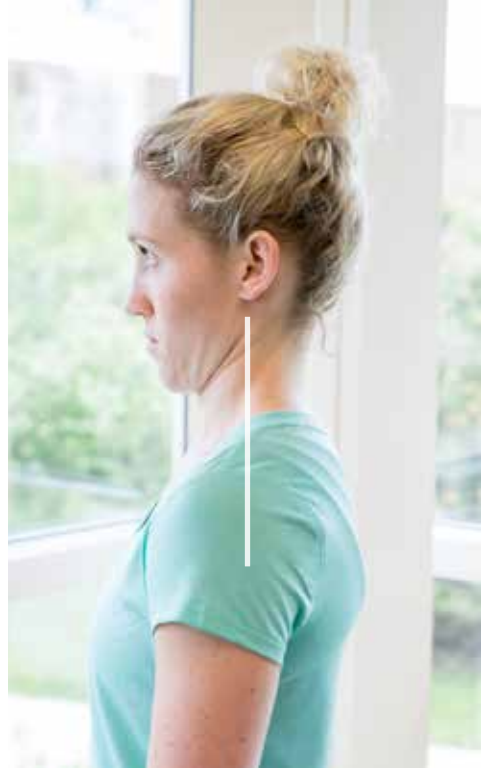
While standing tall with your shoulders back, slowly draw your chin back so your ears line up with your shoulders. The forehead should not tilt up or down.

Repeat | 10 Repetitions

Hold | 2 Seconds

Complete | 2 Sets

Perform | 2 Times per Day





CERVICAL CHIN TUCK WITH HEAD LIFT

Lie on your back and tuck your chin, so that you feel the muscles on the back of your neck stretching. Keep your chin tucked and lift your head one inch off the mat. Hold for 5 seconds. Lower your head back down and release the chin tuck.



Repeat | 10 Times
Hold | 5 Seconds
Complete | 2 Set
Perform | 2 Times a Day

SCALENE STRETCH



Place your hands overlapping on your breastbone. Tilt your head upward and away from the affected side until a gentle stretch is felt along the front and side of your neck.

Repeat | 2-3 Repetitions

Hold | 30 Seconds

Complete | 1 Set

Perform | 2 Times a Day

UPPER TRAP STRETCH

Draw your head back, lining your ears up with your shoulders (a chin tuck position). Place one hand behind your back and place your other hand on your head and gently stretch your head away from the arm that is placed behind your back.

Repeat | 2-3 Times
Hold | 30 Seconds
Complete | 1 Set
Perform | 2 Times a Day



LEVATOR SCAPULAE STRETCH

Grasp your arm of the affected side and gently pull it across the front of your body. Next, tilt your head downward and rotate away from the affected side until you feel a stretch.

Repeat | 2-3 Times

Hold | 30 Seconds

Complete | 1 Set

Perform | 2 Times a Day





WALL POSTURE

Position your feet about 12 to 18" away from the wall and slightly bend your knees. Lean back, placing your back on the wall. Slowly press your low back, tail bone, head, and shoulder blades against the wall. If any of this causes extreme discomfort or pain, relax to a point where it is not bothering you.

Perform | Several Times a Day

Hold | 60 Seconds

POSTERIOR PELVIC TILT

Lie on your back with your knees comfortably bent. Gently draw your belly button down toward the spine to contract your lower abdominals. The muscles you want to contract are the muscles that activate when coughing or laughing. Tilt your pelvis and press your back flat into the mat. Do not hold your breath while performing this exercise.



Repeat | 10 Times
Hold | 5 Seconds
Complete | 2 Sets
Perform | 2 Times a Day

Repeat | 10 Times
Hold | 1 Second
Complete | 2 Sets
Perform | 2 Times a Day



BRACE MARCHING

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Contract your lower abdominals and press your low back into the mat. While holding this contraction, slowly raise one foot a few inches off the ground. Set your foot back down and repeat with the other leg.

SEATED HAMSTRING STRETCH



While seated, rest your heel on the floor with your knee straight. Gently lean forward until a stretch is felt behind your knee and thigh. Make sure to keep your back straight throughout this stretch.

Repeat | 2–3 Times

Hold | 30 Seconds

Complete | 1 Set

Perform | 2 Times a Day



HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

Place your feet about an arm's length away from the wall. Place your hands on the wall and step one foot back. The back leg should remain straight. Bend your front leg and lean forward until you feel a stretch in the front of your hip of the leg that is straight. Keep your back straight.

Repeat | 2-3 Times

Hold | 30 Seconds

Complete | 1 Set

Perform | 2 Times a Day

PIRIFORMIS STRETCH

While lying on your back with both knees bent, cross your affected leg on the other knee. Next, hold your unaffected thigh and pull it up toward your chest until a stretch is felt in the buttock.

Repeat | 2-3 Repetitions

Hold | 30 Seconds

Complete | 1 Set

Perform | 2 Times a Day



PIRIFORMIS STRETCH | MODIFIED

While lying on your back, hold your knee with your opposite hand and draw your knee up and over toward your opposite shoulder.

Repeat | 2–3 Repetitions
Hold | 30 Seconds
Complete | 1 Set
Perform | 2 Times a Day



Walking delivers excellent health benefits, a better-conditioned spine among them. Regular walking can also ease episodes of back pain by stimulating the large nerves in the leg muscles. These leg nerves send stronger signals to the brain that override the pain messages sent by smaller nerves. Studies have shown that a single session of walking—as little as 10 minutes on a treadmill—can lead to a significant reduction in low back pain.

- » **GETTING STARTED.** You can walk any time of the year, and you don't have to make a major investment in special equipment—a pair of well-fitting walking shoes is all you need.
- » **PROGRESS SLOWLY.** As with any new exercise, it is important to begin slowly and gradually increase the amount of time you spend walking.
- » **STAY GROUNDED.** If you are experiencing back pain, walk on a flat surface. Hills can prompt walkers to lean forward, putting additional stress on the back.

A photograph of a man and a woman walking away from the camera on a gravel path in a park. The man is wearing a light blue t-shirt and blue jeans, and the woman is wearing a light pink t-shirt and blue jeans. They are walking towards a body of water in the background, surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a pleasant day for a walk.

Walking To Better Spine Health

A photograph showing a person in the foreground holding a large, flat cardboard box. The person is wearing a blue, patterned long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants. In the background, another person wearing a plaid shirt and jeans is also handling a box. The setting appears to be a warehouse or a moving site with many boxes.

PROTECT YOUR
BACK WHEN LIFTING

WAIST | KNEE HEIGHT LIFTING

Start by standing close to the object you need to lift, with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend at the knees and hips, not at your spine.

Hold the object close to your body as you use your leg muscles to stand back up, lifting the object.

Walk over to the surface you want to set the object onto and set it down. Be sure to not twist your spine but to pivot your feet so that your feet are pointed forward to where you want to set the object.

Slide the object on the shelf to your desired location.



OVERHEAD LIFTING

Start by standing close to the object you need to lift, with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend at the knees and hips, not at your spine.

Grab on to the object by the base and keep it close to your body. Use your leg muscles to stand back up, lifting the object.

Walk over to and point your feet toward the surface you want to set the object on to avoid any twisting of your spine. Use your arms to push the object up. Set the object down making sure you do not extend your spine. Use a step stool if you are unable to lift the object without extending your spine.

Slide the object on the shelf to your desired location.



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When to see a Spine Specialist for Back Pain

We recommend early medical evaluation and conservative treatments; in most cases, this treatment will restore normal movement patterns, help you reclaim flexibility, and resolve your pain.

You should see a spine specialist if:

- » You have a prior injury or significant pain and want to start an exercise program to reduce back pain
- » You experience increased pain or other symptoms while exercising. (Note: Stop exercises causing symptoms, since a number of different spine problems cause pain. And exercises that improve one spine condition may aggravate another)
- » You experience numbness or tingling
- » You experience pain that radiates into an arm or leg
- » Your pain does not improve within a week, or becomes worse over time

The following symptoms require prompt medical evaluation: Leg weakness, loss of bowel or bladder control, severe pain that keeps you from daily activities, color changes in your legs or feet, severe abdominal pain or nausea, or persistent fever.

You are always welcome to talk with a Summit spine specialist at any point in the pain spectrum. We can help with activity modification, lifting mechanics, ergonomics, and treatments to provide relief for an acute flare-up.

At Summit, we understand that when spine pain affects your lifestyle, you want a trusted team working with you to put you on the path to recovery. Our highly trained spine specialists are here to evaluate your symptoms and design a comprehensive treatment plan tailored to your needs.



Summit Orthopedics' Egan location was awarded the prestigious Certificate of Distinction for Spinal Fusion by The Joint Commission. Summit is the first group in Minnesota to have received this award for patient satisfaction and key outcome measurements.



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