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NEW DRIVER NEWSLETTER

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AUGUST 2021

How to Beat Back Pain Naturally

By Hope Zvara, Mother Trucker Yoga

Talking about your back pain isn't a new greeting style, but struggling with back pain does become all too common as we age. A study done by Harvard Health revealed that nearly 80% of people would experience back pain at some point in their lives. As you enter middle age, it is more likely that you experience some back pain than when you were in your teens and twenties. And although age does play a role in how your body feels, it is not the deciding factor in dealing with that pain.

Disc Degeneration



Disc degeneration is a naturally occurring process that happens as we age. And that degeneration can cause back pain when not dealt with properly. Don't be scared; you may have been told you have it, and that's because it's part of the natural aging process and a result of wear and tear on the body, which is all the more reason to focus on taking care of your body sooner than later. Low back researcher Stuart McGill remarks that "a degenerative disc disease diagnosis is the equivalent of telling your mother-in-law with wrinkles that she has degenerative face disease!" This is less about doing "one thing" wrong and more about improving how you use your body to decrease the chances of degenerative disc issues.

Herniated Disc



For truck drivers, the constant sitting with poor posture (rounded lower lumbar) and continual impact (even with a good set of shocks) can leave a driver with a herniated disc. This is where a disc pushes outside the space between the vertebrae and compresses the nerve where it branches off the spinal cord. Sometimes that pain is localized to the area of the herniation. But in other cases, it may not.

Sciatica



If not dealt with properly, that same herniation can cause issues when the sciatic nerve leading into the buttocks and leg is affected. That shooting pain that travels down the leg, even past the knee, is what people call sciatica. Sciatica is not the same as piriformis syndrome, which is where the nerve gets pinched in the buttocks, whereas sciatica root cause happens in the lower back. How can you identify the difference? Sciatica will typically travel below the knee, whereas piriformis syndrome will stay above the knee.

Yet, most cases of low back pain stem from strain or sprain due to simple overuse, underuse (inactivity), excessive lifting, excessive sitting or an accident. But the good news is there are several things you can do to beat back pain naturally that don't cost much and can get you feeling great in no time. Often if you wait it out and take it easy, the pain will resolve itself, and if it doesn't, it may be time to see a medical professional.

Hydrate



It seems simple, I know, but muscle pain and even the dehydration of your disc and irritation to nerves can escalate when you are not hydrated. There is a saying in trucking that most drivers are living on the verge of dehydration. And if this is the case, then you might want to rethink living up to that motto. Drinking half your body weight in ounces may be a bit too much to think about, so start small; how about shooting for four bottles of water each day (8 cups).

Relieve Pain Naturally



Most pain-relieving creams or ointments on the market are lackluster with no real long-term benefits. This is why you need to learn to read the ingredients. A typical pain reliever has 1-3 active ingredients; active ingredients pertain to the components that penetrate the skin and do something for your body. Ingredients like capsaicin, a pepper extract that focuses on helping your body get rid of inflammation. Or arnica, when coupled with other ingredients, is an excellent anti-inflammatory and pain soother. But your pain-relieving research

doesn't have to stop there; peppermint, MSM, ginger, and magnesium all can have a positive effect on the body.

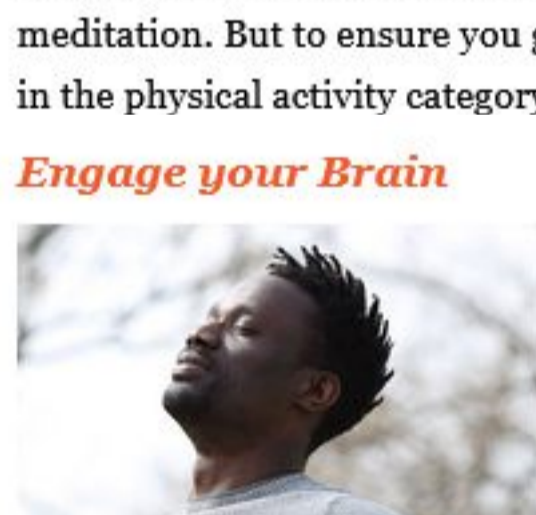
Restorative Sleep



Fatigue is a constant struggle for truck drivers, and much of that fatigue comes from being inactive coupled with poor sleep. After a long day of driving, one can feel tired, but often, it's the mind that is tired more than the physical body. Except when you go to bed, the body still has the energy it has not used up, leaving you restless and unable to get a good night's sleep. Restorative sleep consists of completing all five stages of sleep and the chemical changes within a twenty-four-hour period that

allow the brain and body systems to be repaired, heal, and grow. In the interim, shoot for seven to fifteen-minute power naps with soothing, relaxing music or close your eyes in the driver's seat and focus on your breathing with a meditation. But to ensure you get into that deep REM sleep, make sure you check the box in the physical activity category each day.

Engage your Brain



Don't run just yet; meditation is not only practical but very simple. Meditation does not mean you have to sit for hours, never moving a muscle, which might leave your back hurting more. But the idea of meditation suggests that controlling your breathing and shifting your focus elsewhere may help reduce the pain sensation. And when done correctly over time, you can develop new skills for your brain to reduce or even ignore some pain signals. Remember, your mind connects to everything you do; maybe focusing a little

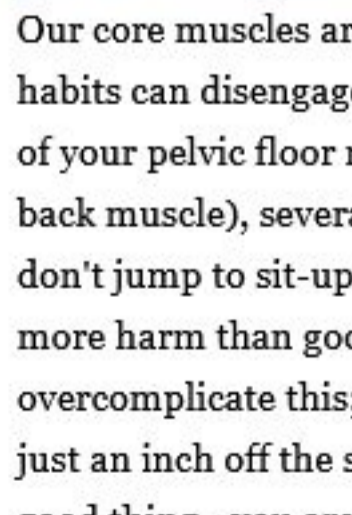
more on the mind and less on the location of the pain may be just what the doctor ordered.

Strengthen Your Core



Our core muscles are the support system for our lower back, and long-term poor sitting habits can disengage our core and leave our back vulnerable to injury. Your core consists of your pelvic floor muscles, obliques, transverse abdominis (your deepest core muscle, a back muscle), several back muscles, and your rectus abdominis (the 6-pack muscle). Now don't jump to sit-ups just yet. An exercise like sit-ups coupled with back pain can cause more harm than good, as sit-ups don't offer any direct back muscle strengthening. Don't overcomplicate this; next time you are driving, try sitting upright and pulling your back just an inch off the seat behind you. You'll be amazed how quickly you fatigue (that's a good thing - you are using your muscles). But when you want to do a few moves to strengthen your core, consider core moves that get you off your back like a Plank, or try a tabletop on all fours and try lifting opposite arms and legs. Or even standing, try driving your hips forward as you extend your arms up and lean back; not only do you stretch your hips from sitting, but you engage all your core muscles simultaneously.

Back pain doesn't have to be a life sentence when we step back and look at what we can do each day to help ourselves feel better. What one thing will you try today to beat back pain naturally? ●

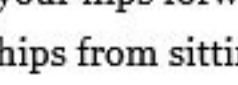


Hope is a yoga, movement, and lifestyle expert who is also a nationally recognized speaker and best-selling author and is the CEO of Mother Trucker Yoga®. She also hosts a radio show titled "A Daily Dose of Hope" that focuses on truck drivers' well-being, implementing programs that speak to both the body and mind. Providing drivers with a more fulfilling lifestyle by improving their health, mobility, and mental point of view. For more information, visit www.MotherTruckerYoga.com

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Truck Pets Rule!

By Linda Caffee

Truck pets are special as we live with them in a very small area 24 hours a day. We know their every mood, and they know ours. The lengths we go to make them happy probably would astound many people, not in a truck.

We travel with a large dog (Texas) and a small cat (Squeaky) and have for the past six years. There is a lot to think about traveling all over the country with animals as they are exposed to a lot. Squeaky never gets out of the truck unless we are home or having the truck searched due to where we are loading or unloading. We could track something in on our shoes that could potentially kill him, so he is always up to date on his shots. Texas is also exposed to a lot all over the country, and she is kept up to date on her shots. Our vet is aware that they are truck pets and gives them appropriate shots for all of the country and not just the area where we live.

Both pets bring us a lot of laughter and joy, and our lives would be very dull without their company.

We buy them food that is readily available everywhere so that if we run out, we can replace their food and not change brands and potentially upset their tummies. It is not fun to wake in the middle of the night with a dog or cat getting sick. Both Texas and Squeaky have food and water available at all times. Our water is filtered twice, and we have not had any trouble using water from spigots at the fuel stations. They are both at a good weight, and if that ever changes, their food will be limited so that they stay healthy.

Texas has a good leash for when she is out walking, and it is not a retractable leash. One of our family members was walking their small dog, and she took off after something at a rest area and hit the end of the retractable leash, and it broke. She was immediately killed on the interstate. The leash has a container for poop bags that are always used. No matter the size of the dog, do the right thing and clean up after them. Texas also has a lit safety collar that she wears at night so that she is visible. Very inexpensive and rechargeable.



Texas also has a dog bed that she uses if we are stopped, and if we are running a team load, she sleeps in bed with that person. Texas also has a routine. In the morning, she gets out to do her job, and when she gets back in the truck, she gets a Greenie toothbrush, Squeaky gets two small Greenies, and then Texas gets her treat (medicine to help with inflammation of her hips). It is funny as they both anticipate this but only first thing in the morning. The rest of the day, Texas gets out, and neither of them expects anything.

When we can control the surroundings, Texas loves to play ball. When she was a puppy, she had a long leash she wore, so if she got distracted, we could stop her. She is a quick learner and has learned other people and dogs are to be ignored and not barked at. The hardest thing to teach her was that if she saw a rabbit, she could not chase it or had to stop on command. We talk to Texas a lot, and she knows and obeys a lot of words.

Texas as a German Shepherd or also known as a German Shedder, lives up to the breed. She creates a new dog in hair every day. We have a good vacuum and a good brush that is used regularly. She does not mind being vacuumed, and while that gets some loose hair, it is not all of it. We have learned to live with hair in everything and know that it is a constant battle to keep the truck clean as well as the truck cab filters.

Both pets bring us a lot of laughter and joy, and our lives would be very dull without their company.

More Tips from Linda

Leave It: This command is a must in a truck stop. Too often, we are walking, and someone has thrown out chicken bones or worse, that could kill your dog.

Hurry Up: There are times when we are in a hurry and need our dog to go to the bathroom quickly. As a puppy, we started with the command hurry up as soon as we saw her squat. As an adult, we tell her to hurry up, which is exactly what she does. We also use it when we are out for a walk or going to play ball so that she gets a reward for her behavior.

Code Word: This word has to be spoken before she can get out of the truck. We can leave the door of the truck open, and people can visit with our dog, or we can walk to the back for something, and she will not get out.

Drop It: Start teaching this with the dog's toys, and then when out walking your dog and they pick up something in the parking lot, they know the command drop it

Back: Works great with a big dog when trying to get into the truck - easy to practice when in the truck. I like to use this command when playing ball with her as I then bounce the ball in front of me and our dog catches it in the air,

Stop: This command is started in the truck to stop what they are doing and freeze. You can practice this when walking them. Tell them to stop, and you keep walking. This really came in handy when she got in the truck and caught her collar on a lever, and it scared her, and she struggled to pull and go forward. When I said stop, she immediately stopped, and I could free her.



Linda Caffee drives team with her husband, Bob. They have been married since 1978 and on the road together since 2000. They started Expediting as team drivers and owner-operators in 2005. They travel with Texas, their German Shepard, and Squeaky the cat and are also speakers at many events covering topics on trucking, expediting, and being an owner-operator. Both are involved in numerous organizations, including Trucker

Buddy International, Women in Trucking, and Freightliner Team Run Smart Pro's. They are also fill-in drivers for Dale Coyne IndyCar Race Team and drive one of the race transporters.

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Truck Parking Etiquette

By Taylor Barker

As a professional driver, I think it is safe to say there are many issues we may notice while driving across the country. Many we can fix ourselves while others are not so easy to fix without the help or the cooperation of others.

One issue that comes to mind is PARKING. While I fully understand the arguments of legitimate parking issues in high-volume areas, I have personally witnessed, daily, drivers who are inconsiderate, lack planning, or are just plain lazy. We can fix these issues ourselves and do our part to help with the safety of others in our industry that are affected by our choices to park illegally. Let me explain.

I could not help to think about the other drivers who were tired that continued on driving, that really needed to park but could not.

Recently, I noticed my time on my E.L.D was getting low. I planned to stop for a 10-hour break at an exit with several truck stops. What a mess. As I entered one truck stop, I found a spot to my disbelief, but there was one issue! Two drivers decided to park illegally on the curb, and it prevented me from backing into the spot. As I turned the corner, I found another spot. WAIT, NEVERMIND, as a bobtail was backed into it. (Another topic for another day). With no other viable options I decided to go to the other truck stop at the exit. Trucks parked on the curb at the entrance nearly made it impossible even to enter, but I got in. Between the trucks parked on the fuel island not fueling (which is a story for another issue) and the trucks parked along the curb, two and three trucks wide, this truck stop was a trucker's nightmare.



As I looked at my E.L.D, I still had 45 minutes left before my time ran out; I remembered there was a rest area just a few miles ahead, so I decided to head that way. As I was pulling off the ramp, trucks were parked on the shoulder, two with their trailers in the road; I make my way into the truck parking. How lucky and relieved I was to notice there were several spots available. WAIT! ARE YOU KIDDING ME? Down the

row of truck parking, trucks were parked long ways behind the legally parked trucks making it IMPOSSIBLE to utilize the parking spots available. While the illegally parked drivers slept, the legally parked drivers pulled out, but no one could get into the parking spots because the illegally parked drivers blocked them.

I could not help to think about the other drivers who were tired that continued on driving, that really needed to park but could not. Their safety and many others are in jeopardy because several drivers decided to be inconsiderate and park illegally, not realizing the effect of their actions. Again, I understand parking issues, and I know it is frustrating, but parking illegally only makes the problem worse, not better, and puts other driver's safety at risk.

That night, I went on with little time to spare, stressing over breaking the law by running out of time when I had planned my trip with an hour to park. I found myself in another truck stop that offered paid parking with several open spots. Although I don't usually pay to park, this night it was definitely worth the money. All in a typical day of trucking, I suppose, but let's all work together to make sure we consider other drivers when parking, making it better for all of us. ●



Taylor Barker is a RoadPro Pro Driver Council member and an owner-operator leased to Heniff Transportation, pulling chemical tankers. He is married to his best friend, Cherie Barker, and works to grow both of their businesses, as they enjoy giving back to their community. Taylor also has a radio show called Unplugged Radio Show, where he interviews truckers and trucking-related companies to promote brotherhood and the positive in people. Taylor is also an accomplished musician and was named the 2019 Truckers Top Talent winner at the Great American Trucking Show. When

he is home, he enjoys building furniture and playing music.





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Enjoy the Ride

By Kim McDonnell

Trucking is one of the few careers that allow you the opportunity to see the country in a way that most people with a 9 to 5 will never experience. While you may plan your route and stops based on parking, what is closest to your delivery, the best place to eat, where to do your laundry, or get a shower – there is something else you should consider – What else is nearby?

While most people work all year at a job they don't like to save up and take a few weeks of vacation; truck drivers have an opportunity to be tourists every day. Each load is different and brings you to a new place. Seeing spectacular sunsets or sunrises is not something that everyone gets to experience and certainly never grows old. Making a living while enjoying the beauty and wonder of the country is also a big WIN!

Every day as a truck driver offers a variety of new experiences as nothing is ever routine.

There may be a historical site nearby, a scenic mountain range, or a famous waterway or river. Maybe it is a theme park or a local tourist attraction. Perhaps you get off the highway and travel the local state road to take in the sites.

You may face a situation where you unloaded and had expected to reload that same day. But for whatever reason, you are not able to get out of town that day. Don't just sit in your truck; get out and explore. Ask the locals what cool places are nearby to check out.

If you are bobtail, many places consider a semi the same as an RV and will allow you to park. Trucks stops, even if they say 'no dropped trailers,' will usually allow you to drop the trailer for a few hours, especially if you have paid for your spot. Just make sure to use your manners when you ask the manager. You can also use a rideshare service like Uber or Lyft to get to your destination.

Whatever it is, do your homework and check out what surrounds your destination or what might be along the route you plan to travel. Take advantage of the area when you stop for your 10 or 34. Every day as a truck driver offers a variety of new experiences as nothing is ever routine. **Enjoy the Ride!**

Check out these suggestions from other truck drivers:



Black Dragon Canyon, Utah – If you are on I-70 in western Utah near the Green River, make sure you pull off at the Black Dragon Canyon overlook. The views are stunning. Nearby you will find a trail that will take you past a lot of petroglyphs. The trail is about 2 miles, so make sure you have water and even a snack.

Wall, South Dakota – Mostly known for the famous Wall Drug Store, you will also find the northern 'wall' of the South Dakota Badlands National Park. While in the area, you may also want to check out Mount Rushmore, the Crazy Horse monument, and historic Downtown Deadwood.

Columbia River Gorge, Oregon – The Gorge was designated a National Scenic Area and has exceptional views of the river and mountains. There are dozens of waterfalls to discover if you decide to take a walk along the waterfront. Make sure to check out some of the local restaurants too.

LaGrande, Oregon – You can park right below one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world and check out the area. La Grande host a great art community, hiking trails, and more.

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, New Mexico – Taking place October 2 -10, this is the largest balloon festival globally and hosts hundreds of colorful balloons that fill the skies over Albuquerque. Each day, the sky over the Sandia Mountains is filled with hundreds of spectacular balloons that vary in size, shape, and color.

Steamtown, Scranton, Pennsylvania – Learn the history of the steam locomotive and how it played a role in transportation at this national historic site. Much of Steamtown is self-guided, and you can experience it at your own pace.

Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing, Ocala, Florida – This place has truck parking, and anyone who likes drag racing will surely love what this destination has to offer. It is well maintained with some exceptional exhibits. ●





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