

# Sports Medicine: Mid-Back Strain

A mid-back strain is an injury to the muscles and ligaments of the middle back that attach to the ribs, chest wall and the thoracic spine. These muscles steady the spine and allow it to move. The mid-back provides most of the back's motion, mainly rotation (twisting).

## Signs and symptoms

- pain in the back that may affect only one side and gets worse with movement
- swelling or spasms of the back muscles
- loss of back muscle strength
- a crackling sound when muscles are touched

## Increased risk

- sports that cause repeated twisting or bending of the spine (football, wrestling, golf, tennis, gymnastics)
- poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility)
- poor warm-up before practice or play
- having a previous back injury or surgery
- poor lifting techniques or posture

## Treatment

- Medicine
  - Anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®) may be recommended. Take these as directed by your health care provider.
  - Other minor pain relievers, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®).
  - Topical ointments that can be sprayed or rubbed on, or come as patches, may provide relief.



- Use of cold and heat
  - Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours for swelling and after any activity that makes symptoms worse. Use ice packs or an ice massage.
  - Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your health care provider or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or warm soak. Apply for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Exercises – to improve range of motion, strength and flexibility may be recommended. These can be done at home, but your health care provider may recommend a referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer.

## How to prevent

- Do correct warm-up and stretching before practice or competition.
- Use proper lifting, posture and sports techniques.
- Maintain proper strength, conditioning, core strength, scapular (shoulder blade) stability and flexibility.

## When to call the health care provider

Call your health care provider or the **Sports Medicine team** at **(614) 355-6000** if:

- symptoms get worse after 2 to 4 weeks, even with treatment
- you have loss of bowel or bladder function
- new, unexplained symptoms develop

To schedule an appointment with Sports Medicine, visit [NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling) or scan this code with your camera phone.

