

Men's Health

Who'll conquer

One of these spasm sufferers—or you?

ARUN SINGH

Age: 27
Height: 5ft 9in
Weight: 70kg
Profession: Fitness trainer

How he hurt his back:

Slept on an old sofa on vacation

How he'll beat it: By following his doctor's advice: taking ibuprofen (800mg three or four times a day after meals), using hot and cold packs and gentle exercising and stretching.

Advantages:

- Alternating ice with heat.
- His plan of regular lightweight training and stretching.

Disadvantages:

- His aggressive personality to rush his comeback.
- A high dosage of painkillers masking the pain to work out.
- He continues training clients, adding to the strain.

KUNAL SHARMA

Age: 24
Height: 5ft 8in
Weight: 65kg
Profession: Owns a departmental store

How he hurt his back:

Falling down while playing football with the guys

How he'll beat it: By visiting a physiotherapist once a week.

Advantages:

- His back specialist who aids his stretches and gives advice.
- Short-term physiotherapy is effective in eliminating muscular lower-back pain.
- Daily stretching is a big help in rehab.

Disadvantages:

- No medication and no exercise apart from his sessions.
- His job requires lifting and bending.
- He is a smoker.

PRANAV MIGLANI

Age: 33
Height: 5ft 10in
Weight: 74kg
Profession: Realtor

How he hurt his back:

Lugging his golf kit up two floors after daily golf. He never uses a caddy

How he'll beat the pain: By resting on the couch while taking a standard dose of ibuprofen—200mg every four to six hours.

Advantages:

- A break from golf.
- Ibuprofen treats the symptoms but not the cause of pain.

Disadvantages:

- Too much rest can weaken the back.
- He's not taking enough ibuprofen. The suggested dose is good for headache but not a backache.
- At 33, his spine has seen better days. Age is a factor.



TWO-SECOND TIP WHEN STRETCHING, EASE YOUR BODY INTO POSITION UNTIL YOU FEEL THE STRETCH AND HOLD FOR ABOUT 25

Men's Health

03/09
ALPHA MALE
Guy Wisdom

back pain first?

THE SPINAL MAP

RISK FACTOR	Point Value	Arun	Kunal	Pranav	You
AGE					
Your spine degenerates with age, increasing your risk of injury and your recovery time.	Under 30? (+1)	1	1		
	Over 30? (-1)			-1	
ACTIVITY LEVEL					
Sedentary people are less prone to back injury because of their lack of activity, but once hurt they take the longest to recover.	Daily exercise? (+1)	1		1	
	Some exercise? (0)		0		
	Couch potato? (-1)				
HEAVY LIFTING AT WORK					
Shouldering big loads is a re-injury risk, and men injured on the job are less motivated to go back to the activity that hurt them.	No lifting? (+1)	1			
	Some lifting? (0)		0		
	Lots of lifting? (-2)			-2	
MOTIVATION TO RECOVER					
How aggressive your personality is will determine your re-injury risk. Slow and steady wins this race.	Gung-ho personality? (-1)	-1			
	Everything at medium speed? (+1)		1	1	
	Just plain lazy? (-2)				
WEIGHT TRAINING					
Working the abs, lower back, glutes, hamstrings, quads and hip flexors can help cure back pain.	Light weights two or three times a week? (+1)	1			
	No weight training? (-1)		-1	-1	
STRETCHING					
Even mild work on those above-mentioned muscles can speed rehabilitation.	Stretch daily (+2)	2	2		
	Stretch less than daily? (+1)				
	Does no stretching? (-1)			-1	
MEDICATIONS					
A high dosage of ibuprofen (800mg or four times a day after meals) can help heal muscular inflammation.	High dosage? (+1)	1			
	Moderate dosage? (0)			0	
	Drug-free? (-1)		-1		
HOT AND COLD PACKS					
Alternating ice and heat for first 24 to 36 hours promotes healing.	Fire and ice? (+1)	1			
	No compresses? (-1)		-1	-1	
TOTAL		9	1	-6	

YOUR SCORE • If your score is 5 or higher: You'll be back in business in no time. • If your score is 0—4: You're on the road to recovery. Continue seeing that nurse. • If your score is less than 0: Picture yourself in a brace.

Final Analysis

Get it off your back

The winner is Arun! Dr Sanjay Sarup, senior orthopaedic consultant, Max Health Care, New Delhi, helped us determine which contestant has the best chance of beating minor muscular back pain. Arun's doctor-recommended plan of medication, hot and cold packs and exercise is the best starting point for muscular back pain. "The majority of patients on this programme respond in about 72 hours," says Dr Sarup. "After that, they just have to be careful doing what injured them in the first place." As for Kunal, the doctor says there's nothing wrong with his trip to the physiotherapist other than timing. "Physiotherapists help get patients out of pain quickly," says Dr Sarup. "If there is no improvement in two weeks, a consultation with an orthopaedic should be set up." Pranav's self-prescribed methods aren't recommended, says Dr Sarup. He's doing nothing to minimise his back pain in order to ward off another injury, which will happen with lugging around golf kits for 18 holes. Bottom line: When back pain strikes, one of the things you don't do is nothing.



PHOTOGRAPHY: RITESH SHARMA

SECONDS. BREATHE DEEPLY TO HELP MOVE OXYGEN-RICH BLOOD TO THOSE SORE MUSCLES. ENSURE YOU NEVER BOUNCE