

# **Back-Safe**

# *RVing*

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The Smart Approach



**PRODUCTS**

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# **Back-Safe RVing**

## **The Smart Approach**

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## **1 Back Pain: A Sore Subject for Many RVers**

Lower back pain is one of the most common conditions in the US and one of the leading causes of physician visits.

In fact, at least 80% of adults will experience low back pain at some point in their lives, and a recent national survey shows that back pain is on the rise among many RVers, with more than half of RVers (54%) reporting lower back pain after being on the road.

Painful culprits included sitting for long periods of time, accidents resulting from slippery surfaces and bending down to reel in unwieldy 50 amp power cords.

## **2 About Lumbar Pain**

Pain in the last five bones of the lower spine (the lumbar vertebrae) or the muscles of the lower back is called lumbar pain. It is often due to spasms or stiffness in the muscles that run along the spine and can extend to the buttocks or thighs.

While many types of lower back pain have no known cause, certain types of pain can be linked to a general cause (such as muscle strain) or a diagnosable condition (such as degenerative disc disease). The majority of episodes of acute low back pain are due to a muscular strain (such as from lifting a heavy object or a sudden movement).

The good news is that muscle strains usually heal with time (a couple of days or weeks) because muscles have a good blood supply to bring the necessary nutrients and proteins for healing to take place, but back pain can be very complex and difficult to accurately diagnosis and treat.

There are many different causes and contributing factors to back pain, and a wide range of possible treatments that may or may not work for the same condition. That's why it's important for you to know these facts and follow these tips for back-safe RVing.

### **3 Tips for Back-Safe RVing**

You've probably heard this information before, but it's worth reminding ourselves of back-friendly habits we can practice everyday.

#### **3.1 Stay in Shape**

The best way to prevent common back problems is to stay fit and active. An exercise program should include stretching and strengthening specifically for the back and aerobic exercises. A physiotherapist, osteopath, chiropractic or fitness trainer can suggest which exercises are best for you but remember: any exercise should be gentle and you should never be forced to strain your back. One of the best ways to stay in shape is through walking—and RVers have the perfect opportunity to visit some of our nation's most beautiful areas just by putting on a pair of comfortable shoes and exploring.

#### **3.2 Maintain Proper Posture**

It's important to ensure a good sitting position, especially when on the road for long stretches of time. Make sure your seat is at the correct height, and that you have a proper backrest to reduce pressure on the lower back. A portable lumbar support can be used on seats with poor back support. Chairs with armrests help by supporting the weight of the arms. Rest your feet flat on the floor or use a foot support (simple wooden supports are easy to make with minimal carpentry skills) to prevent the weight of the lower legs being supported by the front of the thighs.

### **3.3 Practice Safe Lifting.**

Poor lifting technique is a major cause of back strain and injury. Injuries are less likely if you are fit and have strong back, stomach and leg muscles.

To lift safely:

- ✓ Make a firm base with your feet, keeping them about shoulder width apart
- ✓ Lift with your legs, bending your knees rather than your back
- ✓ Do not kneel or overbend your knees
- ✓ Keep your chin held in and raised- this helps keep your back straight
- ✓ Ensure the load is as close to your body as possible
- ✓ Keep your arms and elbows tucked in close to the body
- ✓ Do not twist your back but change direction by moving your feet
- ✓ Invest in a cable management system with products like Shoreline Reels™ (for both electrical cords and hoses) to reduce back strain

### **3.4 Don't Panic**

When your back begins hurting, remember that back pain due to strain or poor posture usually lasts two or three days, followed by weeks of less severe discomfort. If you have back pain, reduce your activity and avoid further strain. However, prolonged bed-rest may make the pain worse so avoid complete inactivity. Sometimes a hot water bottle or an ice pack applied to the affected area provides relief.

### **3.5 Take Time to Heal**

Careful stretching and gentle walking often speeds the healing process but over-strenuous activity during the first six weeks can bring the problem back and delay recovery. It may also help to sleep on a firmer mattress or put a board under the usual one. Alternatively, sufferers can sleep on the floor using a folded towel under the lower portion of the back and a pillow under the knees to aid comfort and position.

### **3.6 Know When to See the Doctor**

Don't assume you don't need to see a doctor if you do not have the pain all the time. You may experience pain only during specific actions, such as only when walking or sitting or standing. Be sure to tell this to the doctor as it may help to pinpoint the cause of the pain. See your doctor immediately if you have:

- Unexplained fever or any swelling or redness on your back or spine
- Pain that travels down your legs below the knee
- Weakness or numbness in one or both legs
- Loss of control of your bowel or bladder

These symptoms may indicate damage to nerves coming from the spinal cord and may require urgent treatment. You should also consult a doctor if you have persistent pain after a severe blow, a fall or an injury or your back pain lasts longer than a week.

## **4 Other 'Back Facts'**

Also keep these 'back facts' in mind when planning your 'back-safe' RVing approach:

### **4.1 We're All Different**

Back pain is a complicated personal experience. The level, degree and manageability of pain is very different for every person. Some people can literally have a large herniated disc and experience no pain at all, and for others a simple muscle strain can cause excruciating back pain that can limit their ability to walk or even stand. Also, with some conditions, the pain can flare from time to time and then reside, but may get worse over time. Because only you know your level of pain, your treatment will most likely be more successful if you proactively participate in making decisions about your medical care.

### **4.2 Common Anatomical Causes of Back Pain**

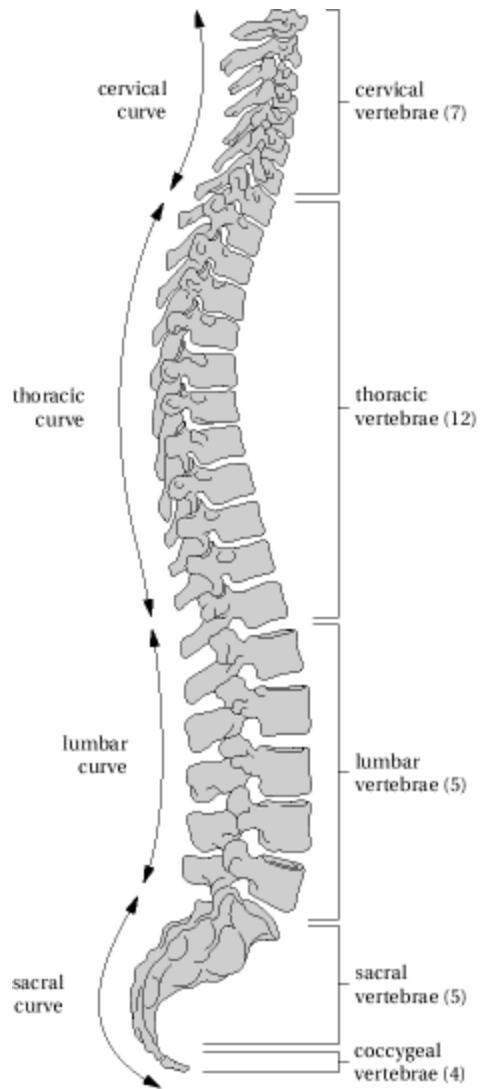
Many structures in your back can cause pain. While the anatomical structure of the spine is a truly a marvel in terms of its form and function, many different structures in the spine are capable of producing back pain. Moreover, the spine is a part of the body that is highly prone to injury because it is subject to many strong force-torque and twisting, sudden jolts, and daily stresses (e.g. from poor posture). Common anatomical causes of back pain include:

- ✓ The large nerve roots that go to your legs and arms may be irritated
- ✓ The smaller nerves that stimulate your spine with nerves may be irritated
- ✓ Your large paired back muscles (erector spinae) may be strained
- ✓ Your bones, ligaments or joints themselves may be injured

- ✓ The disc space itself can be a major cause of back pain

### **4.3 Diagram of the Back**

The source of the pain can be hard to identify. The nerve supplies to most of the anatomical structures in the spine (discs, muscles, ligaments, etc) overlap, which often makes it impossible for the brain to distinguish between injury to one structure versus another. For example, a torn or herniated disc can feel identical to a bruised muscle or ligament injury. For this reason, your physician will first take a thorough medical history and physical exam, discuss your symptoms, and may conduct diagnostic tests to try to figure out the underlying cause of your pain.



Bones of the spinal column

#### 4.4 Different Kinds of Pain

The type of back pain (the way you describe the pain) and the area of distribution of the pain and related symptoms are important parts of determining a diagnosis, and the treatments can be very different depending on the type of pain.

Three common classifications of back pain include:

**Axial pain**, also called mechanical pain, is the most common cause of back pain and may be felt in a number of different ways (sharp or dull, constant or comes and goes, etc). A muscle strain is a common cause of axial pain.

**Referred pain** is often characterized as dull and achy. Referred pain tends to move around and vary in intensity. It may radiate from the lower back into the groin, pelvis, buttock and upper thigh. Injury to any of the interconnecting sensory nerves of the lower back can cause this type of pain. As an example, degenerative disc disease may cause referred pain to the hips and posterior thighs

**Radicular pain** is often described as deep and radiating through an extremity (arm or leg), and can be accompanied by numbness and tingling or weakness. This type of pain is caused by compression, inflammation and/or injury to a spinal nerve root. Another term for radicular pain is sciatica and the problem can be caused by such conditions as a herniated disc or spinal stenosis.

#### **4.5 Pain Treatments are Available**

Frequently, even after many tests and visits to different doctors, there may be no apparent anatomical cause for back pain. However, the pain is still real.

While psychological factors, such as depression and sleeplessness, will often need to be included as part of a comprehensive treatment program, it is also important to treat the pain, and there are a variety of conservative care options like the ones outlined in this guide that can help alleviate the pain.

## **5 More Back Pain Resources**

Though these resources aren't targeted specifically to RVers, they can provide information that might help you.

[www.relaxtheback.com](http://www.relaxtheback.com)

[www.backbenimble.com](http://www.backbenimble.com)

[www.spine-health.com](http://www.spine-health.com)

[www.backpainreliefonline.com](http://www.backpainreliefonline.com)

[www.orthotr.com](http://www.orthotr.com)

[www.spineuniverse.com](http://www.spineuniverse.com)

[www.badbackclinic.com](http://www.badbackclinic.com)

[www.espineonline.com](http://www.espineonline.com)

[www.backrelief.com](http://www.backrelief.com)

Also, at the American Chiropractic Association's website, you can search for a Doctor of Chiropractic in your area, and get valuable health tips for consumers:

[www.acatoday.com](http://www.acatoday.com)

## **6 About Shoreline Reels™ and TDI Products**

Shoreline Reels save RVers time and space, as well as being an important element of back-friendly RVing. With the push of a button, these products wind up and store 30 and 50 amp power cords and hoses on a single device located in your cable storage compartment. For just a square foot of space, these products eliminate the struggle, tangles and dirty mess you get when you roll up and stow your shoreline cables and hoses. These are the only products that both retract and store the cables and hoses in a single unit, allowing optimal utilization of stow space.

The following articles from *FMCA Today* and *RV News* explain more about the products, which are now standard equipment on many coaches, including Travel Supreme, Foretravel, Fleetwood, Jayco, Forest River, and Monaco.

The patented design of the reels incorporates the twelve-volt motor inside the reel hub, providing the most compact cord reels in the industry.

Shoreline Reels are manufactured by TDI Products with the highest quality materials and are supported by an unconditional three-year warranty.

All Shoreline Reels are available in a variety of lengths and “pigtail” configurations for easy installation and use.

For more information, contact:

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## Hose And Power Cable Reels

According to product literature, Shoreline Reels are approximately 50 percent smaller than similar devices. This enables them to be used in applications where other reels would not fit. The reduction in size is made possible because the drive motor is inside the hub of the reel. Power retraction, controlled by a push-button mechanism, makes hose or cable retrieval easy, because the reel does most of the work. The 17-pound Mini Hose Reel includes 25 feet of 5/8-inch, kink-free hose. Water service is guaranteed no matter how much hose is extended, so the entire hose does not need to be pulled out unless needed. The Mini Hose Reel sells for \$275 including the hose. Another model, the 22-pound, 50-amp Power Reel, weighs 48 pounds with the included 36 feet of UL/CSA power cord. A push of a button retracts and stores the cord in this \$675 unit. Both Shoreline Reels come with all mounting hardware and brackets and are covered by a three-year warranty.



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Family Motor Coaching April, 2001

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***DISPLAY CASE***

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**Shoreline Reels™ Save RVers  
Space, Time and Energy**

Shoreline Reels, manufactured by TDI Products, save RV owners space, time and back-breaking energy by retracting and storing 50 or 30 amp cords or hoses in a single unit. The products are 50% smaller than any other cord or hose management system on the market, and give users a push button that makes cable or hose retrieval easier.

The size reduction is possible by locating the reel drive motor inside the hob of the reel, a patent-protected innovation. Another advantage is ease of use through a push-button mechanism that makes cable or hose retrieval easier. After the user unplugs the cord, he or she simply pushes a button and guides the cord while it winds itself back up into a compact space.

TDI will customize Shoreline Reels to meet RV manufacturers requirements for future RVs.

For more information, dealers, distributors and OEMs should contact TDI Products, Inc., 740 S. 10th St., Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250. Phone 904/242-0742.

RV News January, 2001  
<http://www.rv-news.com/jan2001/dc.htm>

For Just a Square Foot of Space,  
You Get Unlimited Convenience.  
Call to Order Your Shoreline Reel™ Today and  
Get A **5% Discount** When You Mention This Report.



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