



*“Pain is your body’s way of asking you to pay attention, observe without judgment, and move toward ease.”*

## Product of the Month:

10% off

### Cal-Mag Citrate by Thorne Research

*This is probably Dr. Brooke’s favorite product. It’s great for tight muscles which can cause back pain (and a lot of other pains), and as an added benefit, if taken before bed, helps a person experience a more restful sleep.*

### AIM for Health

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# Put Your Back Into It

## An Integrated Approach to Back Pain Management

By Dr. Mohammad Shegeft  
and Dr. Brooke Azie-Rentz

Back pain is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common neurological complaint in the US, headaches being #1, and as Americans we spend over \$50 million per year to try and treat it! Your low back, or lumbar spine, supports most of the weight of your body, especially when standing on one leg or off balance, and therefore is easily injured.

### Causes Include:

Degenerative conditions such as arthritis or disc disease, osteoporosis or other bone diseases, viral infections, irritation to joints and discs, congenital abnormalities in the spine (scoliosis), obesity, smoking, weight gain during pregnancy, stress, poor physical condition, posture inappropriate for the activity being performed, poor sleeping positions, traumatic injuries (car accident or fall), aging (loss of hydration to the disc, decreased flexibility, osteoporosis) and even cancer (primary bone cancer or metastasis from prostate, colon, etc.).

Most people experience low back pain as a dull ache or a sharp pain that only occurs in certain positions. However other symptoms include numbness and tingling down the leg, muscle spasms, limited flexibility, an inability to stand straight and a loss or change of bladder control. Symptoms can be in one small spot or a broad area across the entire back.

Back Pain, restricted range of motion, and laxity in joint movement are all very common occurrences during our lives. That knowledge doesn’t make your back or other joints feel any better, but the good news is that

there are some simple things you can do to alleviate that pain. At AIM we use a variety of methods that are specific to you and will address your specific goal—gentle Muscle Energy Techniques, Yoga exercises, Acupuncture, Kinesio-taping, and Naturopathic Manipulation. We can also offer natural supplements that can help encourage healing and muscle relaxation.

**Yoga** poses can help increase strength in very specific muscles and muscle groups. By adopting some basic body postures and breathing techniques you can strengthen your core muscles, have better posture alleviate current, and prevent future back pain.

**Muscle Energy Stretching** is a manual therapy that helps restore balance and alignment in the body. These techniques not only improve muscle function, but can decrease hypertonicity of the muscle groups such as hamstrings and help improve back pain.

**Acupuncture** helps back pain by increasing circulation, decreasing inflammation and recruiting the body’s own pain relievers to the local area. It also helps to relax the muscles attaching to the lumbar spine and pelvis. Using acupuncture as an adjunct therapy speeds up recovery time.

**Kinesio-Taping** is a superb way to improve low back problems, in particular postural issues but also in those who are susceptible to low back muscular strain and fatigue from work and sports. After its application, the tape acts as a gentle, tugging reminder on the skin where it is applied to insure proper posture. The tape can be applied to decrease

inflammation, stabilize joint and even reduce pain at the site where it is being applied.

**Supplementation** like Magnesium (Cal-Mag) can act as a natural muscle relaxers and help with aching muscles that influence your back pain, and even with sleep. Homeopathics such as Arnica can be used to decrease acute pain and even chronic achy pain in muscles after exercise or injuries.

**Naturopathic Manipulation** is a method of bone alignment where a gentle low force movement is delivered to the area of treatment to restore alignment. Such techniques can even increase blood flow to the area and decrease healing time.

**Trigger Point Injections** are used to treat painful areas of muscle that contain trigger points, or knots of muscle that form when muscles do not relax. The gentle injections contain local anesthetics with B12 and other homeopathics, like Traumeel.

**Ultrasound Therapy** is a noninvasive therapy used to warm the body’s internal tissues, which causes muscles to relax. Sound waves pass through the skin and into the joint muscles and other soft tissue to decrease inflammation, relax muscle and ultimately decrease pain in specific joints.

Some items on this list can be undertaken by yourself, such as supplementing Magnesium. Others will require you to come in for a visit. No two individuals are the same and no two back pains respond the same. That is why we have found that when we combine these treatments together, we get much faster and more permanent results.

## Perspective on Back Pain: The pro's and con's of Yoga in response to back pain

### Getting Technical: How Can Yoga Help Your Back?

By Nichole Santoro, LAc, AIM Yoga Instructor

Yoga can be a fantastic tool to help people with simple low back pain get relief and also to learn how to keep out of pain in the future. However, yoga can also be a culprit of low back pain for some. When it comes to yoga, avoiding low back pain and developing awareness of how to prevent it comes down to a balance between strength and flexibility. The core abdominal and pelvic muscles must be strong, while the muscles and fascia that attach to the pelvis and low back need to be supple and fairly flexible. The key structures to keep flexible include the hamstrings, psoas, piriformis and the Iliotibial band (IT Band).

The IT Band is a thick fascial ligament that originates on the top of the hip bone, traverses the lateral thigh muscles and attaches below the knee on the lateral leg bone. Because it crosses two joints (hip and knee) when this ligament gets tight and shortened, as can happen from a lot of sitting, it often results in pain in the low back, knees or both.

The hamstring is a massive muscle that attaches on the sits bone at the bottom of the pelvis. When these muscles are tight it clamps down on the pelvis and restricts free range of movement in the low back.

The psoas muscle originates at the lumbar spine and dives into the pelvic bowl where it unites with the iliacus muscle and continues down to attach on the thigh bone. Because it attaches on the lumbar spine and crosses the hip joint this muscle is very important to keep supple for a healthy low back.

Finally, the piriformis, which originates on the sacrum and crosses beneath the gluteus maximus to attach to the hip bone, is another important piece of the puzzle. Tightness of this muscle can cause low back pain and even sciatica symptoms.

### Spotlight on the Clinic: YOGA at AIM!

Our Yoga Program is now in full swing here at AIM, and we are excited to share it with you. With AIM co-founder Nichole Santoro already teaching a weekly class since the beginning, our goal in 2014 is to develop more of a Yoga presence at the clinic, as we all truly believe that Yoga can provide additional health benefits for most people both in terms of physical strength and flexibility, but also in mental and spiritual clarity and peace.

Now with a space dedicated to Yoga, we have been very blessed to have Diana Bodyhadi, Petra Davis, Dee Kanjin, Patti Shelton, and Dr. Alison Kerns join us each week to teach the various daily Yoga offerings at AIM. Classes begin at 9:15AM and 4:15PM daily (Tue-Fri, with no class Friday PM), and also at 10am on Saturdays, and run 75-90 minutes. Look for the Yoga Schedule, and instructor bios, on our website and blog.

### TRY THIS AT HOME!

The more range of motion we can get in the lumbar spine by way of increasing flexibility of the muscles that attach on the pelvis and low back the happier and healthier our low backs will be. Core strength is the other important piece of the puzzle when it comes to addressing low back pain. The job of strengthening the core must be taken up with earnest and daily practice, but it definitely pays off! The core muscles are opposite to the back muscles in the body and when they are weak the back muscles end up taking on the load. There are many core strengthening exercises that are incorporated into a single yoga class.

The key to strengthen the core is to bring awareness to that area with every movement. An easy and great exercise to start with is plank. When doing plank, be sure to keep your hips lifted and your neck and jaw relaxed. Try to stay for 5 long breaths, although you will quickly find you can stay longer as you start to create stability in your core.

Here are some yoga poses that address the major culprits of low back pain and can be used therapeutically to treat minor nagging back pain from inactivity and tension.



**IT Band**



**Psoas**



**Piriformis**

**Plank**



**Hamstring**

*All articles appearing here are written by practitioners at Alpine Integrated Medicine. AIM believes in the principle of "doctor as teacher", and are proud to provide a source of knowledge and information to our community.*