

# When to see someone for your neck or back pain

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Credit: centro güel

After extended periods of research and computer work, you may be no stranger to neck and back pain. The daily wear and tear of graduate student life can often take its toll on your joints and muscles. But how do you know when your pain is manageable and when it's time to see a professional?

## Stay in tune with your body

Being mindful and listening to what your body telling you is a good skill to practice. By tuning in to how you're feeling, you can be more aware of when you might be pushing too hard or when you need a break. Check in with yourself and ask: Are you sitting up straight, breathing deep and stretching when necessary?

## Understand your pain

In general, if you have a strain or [pain](#) in any joint or muscle, resting and taking pressure off the area is a good first step. The PRICE/RICE (Protection, Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) technique can be helpful for swollen joints, like an ankle or knee.

If the pain isn't getting better, swelling continues or if you're struggling with returning to activity, it's time to consult with a medical provider or physical therapist to figure out what's really going on. Taking time off and resting is a good start, but getting to the "why" is important to prevent an injury in the future.

It's time to see someone if...

- Your pain or soreness has been lingering for more than 3–4 days.
- Your pain is getting worse.
- You can't get through your day without your pain distracting you.
- Your pain has been dull but persistent.
- Your pain is from a traumatic event.

If you identify with any of the statements above, it might be time to see someone.

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

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