

## Quick Tips to a Healthier Back

([www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov))

Back pain is one of the most common medical problems in the U.S. It affects most people at least once in their lifetime.



The most common cause of back pain is muscle spasms. An awkward movement of the back such as an unusual bending or twisting motion, simple sneezing, or lifting a heavy object can lead to a severe muscle spasm. Long lasting back pain can occur after accidents that have resulted in injury to the back.

### Prevention

The best way to prevent back pain is to do regular back strengthening and stretching exercises, at least 2-3 times per week. Benefits of exercising the back include:

- Strengthening the back, neck and shoulder muscles which makes injury less likely
- Making the back more flexible, increasing its range of motion and endurance
- Relaxes the back and reduces pain

### Tips for a healthier back

- Always stretch before exercise or other strenuous physical activity.
- Don't slouch when standing or sitting. When standing, keep your weight balanced on your feet. Your back supports weight most easily when curvature is reduced.
- At home or work, make sure your work surface is at a comfortable height for you.
- Sit in a chair with good lumbar support and proper position and height for the task. Keep your shoulders back. Switch sitting positions often and periodically walk around the office or gently stretch muscles to relieve tension. A pillow or rolled-up towel placed behind the small of your back can provide some lumbar support. If you must sit for a long period of time, rest your feet on a low stool or a stack of books.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- Sleep on your side to reduce any curve in your spine. Always sleep on a firm surface.

- Ask for help when transferring an ill or injured family member from a reclining to a sitting position or when moving the patient from a chair to a bed.
- Don't try to lift objects too heavy for you. Lift with your knees, pull in your stomach muscles, and keep your head down and in line with your straight back. Keep the object close to your body. Do not twist when lifting.
- Maintain proper nutrition and diet to reduce and prevent excessive weight, especially weight around the waistline that taxes lower back muscles. A diet with sufficient daily intake of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D helps to promote new bone growth.
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking reduces blood flow to the lower spine and causes the spinal discs to degenerate.

## The Facts About Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble nutrient that your body can produce but is not found naturally in many foods. Also known as calciferol, vitamin D promotes the absorption of two minerals—calcium and phosphorus—and then helps deposit them in bones and teeth to make them strong and healthy.



Your body produces vitamin D when the sun's ultraviolet rays stimulate your skin to synthesize it. This is the primary way by which humans obtain vitamin D. If you have limited sun exposure, it is essential that you obtain vitamin D from dietary sources. Research also suggests that vitamin D has been linked with lower incidences of cancers and lower rates of immune-related conditions, such as type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis.

### What are the best food sources?

Very few foods are naturally rich in vitamin D. Therefore, most people obtain their vitamin D intake from fortified foods, such as milk, soymilk and fortified cereals. Naturally occurring vitamin D is found in the flesh of fatty fish (mackerel, salmon, sardines) and in egg yolks.

Visit [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com) for additional information

## National Handwashing Awareness Spread The Word...Not the Germs

Did you know that the very simple activity of frequent handwashing with soap and running water has the potential to save more lives than any single vaccine or medical intervention? It is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to prevent diarrheal diseases and pneumonia. ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do **not** eliminate all types of germs. **Hand sanitizers are not effective when hands are visibly dirty.**

### How do you use hand sanitizers?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

**Do NOT touch the T-zone!**  
mucous membranes of your eyes, nose or mouth are where germs enter your body!

**The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness**

1. WASH your hands when they are dirty and BEFORE eating.
2. DO NOT cough into your hands.
3. DO NOT sneeze into your hands.
4. Above all, DO NOT put your fingers into your eyes, nose or mouth!

**Spread the word not the germs!**  
Visit [www.henrythehand.com](http://www.henrythehand.com)

The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness have been endorsed by the AMA & AAFP  
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## Vegetable of the Month: Root Veggies

([www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.org))

**Parsnips** look like a pale carrot and are actually a relative of the carrot, celeriac, and parsley root.



Commonly found in Europe, this root vegetable arrived to the United States with the colonists. Popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries for its celery flavor and nutty fragrance, this vegetable was often used in recipes that called for caloric decadence.

### Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation

Parsnips are available year round with a peak from fall into spring. They are often displayed with the parsley root, so be sure you know which is a parsnip. Parsley roots are typically sold with their feathery greens whereas parsnips are sold by the root.

Select medium sized roots with uniform creamy beige skin. Avoid limp, pitted, or shriveled roots. Store parsnips unwashed wrapped in paper towel, placed in plastic, and store in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for about 2 weeks.

Wash, peel, and trim parsnips as you would a carrot. If steaming, then the parsnips skins will slip off after cooking. If pureeing parsnips, then leave skins intact.

### Rutabaga

A cousin to the turnip, rutabagas are a cross between a cabbage and a turnip. Virtually unknown in the United States until the 19th century, this root gets its name from the Swedish word 'rotabagge' meaning round root.

### Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation

Rutabagas are available year round with a peak in the fall and winter. These roots range from tan to violet in color and are much larger than turnips; choose smooth, heavy, and firm roots. Smaller rutabagas, 4" in diameter, tend to have sweeter flavor. This root stores for about 2 weeks in the refrigerator or at room temperature for a week. Rutabagas are usually covered in wax, so it's best

## Recipe

### Roots — Quick & Simple

Makes 4 servings (½ cup servings each)  
Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables



### Ingredients

2 medium parsnips or rutabagas, peeled and cut in ¾" x ¼" strips  
2 medium carrots, peeled and cut in ¾" x ¼" strips  
1 tsp olive oil  
1/8 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp black pepper

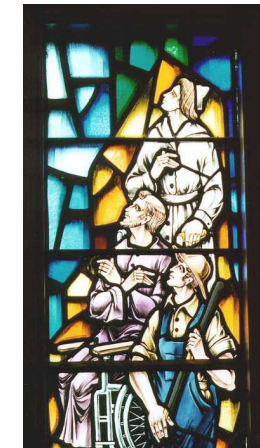
Place in steamer basket over boiling water and steam for 15 minutes, lifting cover periodically during steaming to release steam and acids that can contribute to bitterness. Check for desired tenderness at 15 minutes; cook longer if softer texture is desired.

Remove from steamer basket, empty water from pan, return parsnips and carrots to pan and season lightly with olive oil, salt and fresh ground pepper. Shake or stir gently to coat with seasonings.

Serve immediately or leave partially covered to conserve heat until ready to serve.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 89, Protein 1g, Fat 1g, Percent Calories From Fat 14%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 19g, Fiber 4g, Sodium 77mg.

### Health Ministry Contact Information:



# Wellness Wisdom

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