

Seniors' Permafold®



Topics

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4. Constipation
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Reviewed and Approved by the
Senior Medical Advisory Board

This Permafold® is not meant to take the place of expert medical care or treatment. Follow your doctor's or health care provider's advice.

1. Abdominal Pain

Symptoms

Pain felt anywhere between the lower ribs and pelvis. Pain can be mild to severe; dull or sharp; acute or chronic. Bloating, nausea, etc. can also occur.



Self-Care

- Use a hot water bottle or a heating pad set on low.
- Find a comfortable position. Relax.
- Take an OTC* pain reliever. (See topic 5.)
- Don't wear tight garments.

Call Doctor For:

- Yellow-looking skin or if the whites of the eyes look yellow
- Pain, burning or itching when passing urine; bloody, cloudy, or dark urine; constant urge to urinate
- Fever with abdominal pain
- Sensitive skin on the abdomen or skin rash on only one side of the abdomen
- A bulge and/or discomfort anywhere in the abdomen or groin that is worse with coughing or lifting heavy objects
- Constant belching or nausea. Worsening pain after you eat, bend over, or lie down.

* Over-the-counter

♥ Get Immediate Care For:

- “Heart Attack Warning Signs.” (See box in topic 3.)
- Pain that spreads to the back or chest or feeling a throbbing mass in the abdomen
- Pain that is extreme
- Stools that are tarlike and black in color
- Vomiting blood or stuff that looks like coffee grounds. Vomiting with fever, shaking chills and pain that is felt in one or both sides of the mid back.

2. Back Pain

Symptoms

Back pain can be sharp, dull, acute, or chronic. Swelling in the back area may occur.



Prevention

- When you lift things:
 - Bend at the knees, not at the waist.
 - Hold the object close to your body.
 - Lift slowly. Let your legs carry the weight.
- Develop and maintain good posture.
- Lose weight if you need to.
- Exercise regularly (walk, swim, etc. and do exercises that stretch and strengthen back and abdominal muscles).
- Sleep on a firm mattress.

🏠 Self-Care

For strained muscles or ligaments in the back:

- Take an OTC medicine for pain and swelling, if needed. (See topic 5.)
- For the first 48 hours, apply a cold pack to the painful area for 5 to 10 minutes at a time, several times a day. After 48 hours, apply heat (hot water bottle, etc.) 10 minutes at a time, several times a day.
- Do your regular activities as much as you can. Avoid ones that increase pain. Rest the back if you must, but not in bed more than 2 days.



📞 Call Doctor For:

- Pain that goes down the leg(s) below the knee(s) or pain that is very bad
- Increased pain when you move, cough, sneeze, lift, or strain
- Pain, burning, or itching when you pass urine, or bloody, cloudy, or dark urine
- Back pain with fever or vomiting
- Painful red blisters on one side of the back

♥ Get Immediate Care For:

- Extreme pain across the whole upper back that came on within 15 minutes for no reason
- Back pain with “Heart Attack Warning Signs.” (See box in topic 3.)
- A neck, back, or other serious injury or fall or sudden pain with a “cracking” sound
- Loss of bladder or bowel control

3. Chest Pain

Symptoms

Pain can be sharp or dull; mild to severe. See “Heart Attack Warning Signs” box for other symptoms that can occur with a heart attack.

Self-Care

For a pulled muscle or minor rib injury:

- Don’t strain the muscle or ribs. Rest.
- Take an OTC pain medicine. (See topic 5.)

For a hiatal hernia:

- Lose weight if you need to.
- Avoid tobacco, alcohol, coffee, spicy foods, peppermint, chocolate, citrus juices, and carbonated beverages.
- Don’t bend over or lie down after eating.
- Eat 5 or 6 small meals a day. Don’t have food or milk for 2 hours before bed.
- Don’t wear tight garments.
- Raise the head of your bed 6 inches when you sleep.



Call Doctor For:

- Fever and/or cough with any color sputum
- Belching and/or burning just above the stomach. Chest pain that comes and goes before, during, or after eating, or gets worse when you bend over or lie down
- Worsening chest pain with deep breaths

Get Immediate Care For:

- “Heart Attack Warning Signs” (below)

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Common Warning Signs

- Chest pain. This may spread to the arm, neck, back, jaw, or tooth.
- A feeling of tightness, burning, squeezing, fullness, or heaviness in the chest. This lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Chest discomfort with lightheadedness, fainting, nausea, shortness of breath, sweating, or fast or uneven pulse



Less Common Warning Signs

- Atypical chest pain, abdominal or stomach pain
- Dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, or jaw or arm pain (without chest pain)
- Sweating for no reason; pale, gray, or clammy skin
- An uneasy feeling in the chest with: Unexplained anxiety, fatigue, or weakness; fluttering heartbeats; or severe indigestion that doesn’t go away with an antacid
- Chest pain in a person with a heart condition that does not respond to prescribed medicine
- Chest pain from a bad injury or that hurts all the time and/or gets worse

4. Constipation

Symptoms

Hard, dry, and hard-to-pass stools; abdominal pain and bloating; straining with a bowel movement; continued fullness after a bowel movement

Self-Care/Prevention

- Eat foods high in fiber (e.g., bran, whole-grain breads and cereals, and fresh fruits and vegetables).
- Drink 1½ to 2 quarts of liquids every day.
- Get regular exercise.
- Don't use "stimulant" laxatives. Use stool-softeners or a fiber supplement (e.g., Metamucil®), if okay with your doctor.



Call Doctor For:

- Blood in the stools
- Severe abdominal pain, especially on the lower left side
- Fever with constipation

5. Pain Relief

- Read labels on OTC* pain relievers before you take them. Heed the labels' warnings. If you have questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take pain medicine as prescribed.

* Over-the-counter

6. Depression

Symptoms

Feeling sad, hopeless, helpless, and/or worthless. Crying spells; fatigue; loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities; changes in eating and sleeping patterns. Hard time concentrating or making decisions. Thoughts of suicide or death.

Self-Care for Mild Depression

- Avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Exercise every day.
- Do things that you enjoy and allow you to express yourself, (e.g., writing).
- Be with positive people.
- Talk to a friend or relative who will allow you to vent your tensions and frustrations.
- Relax. Do deep-breathing, etc.
- Laugh. Watch funny shows, etc.



Call Doctor For:

- Loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities most of the day, nearly every day for at least 2 weeks
- Being in a depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, with any of the above symptoms of depression that lasted 2 or more weeks

Get Immediate Care For:

Attempting or planning suicide or having overwhelming thoughts of suicide or death

7. Flu

Symptoms

Muscle aches; headache; fever; chills; extreme fatigue; cough; sore throat

Prevention

- Eat well. Exercise. Get plenty of rest.
- Get a yearly flu vaccine if age 50 or older or if your doctor tells you to.
- Wash your hands often.



Self-Care

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Gargle with warm salt water (1/4 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of water) or 1 tablespoon of hot water mixed with 1 tablespoon of mouthwash.
- Take an OTC* medicine for fever and/or aches. (See topic 5.)

Call Doctor For:

- An antiviral medicine when the flu begins
- An earache; sinus pain; or thick mucus
- Flu symptoms that worsen or not feeling better after using self-care more than a week

Get Immediate Care For:

- Severe shortness of breath or purple lips
- Coughing up true red blood
- Fever, stiff neck, vomiting, and lethargy

8. High Blood Pressure

Blood pressure readings that are consistently: 140/90 mm Hg or higher; 130/85 or higher in persons with diabetes or kidney disease.

Symptoms

Usually no symptoms. If untreated, can lead to stroke, heart, kidney, and eye problems.

Prevention

- Get to and/or stay at a healthy body weight.
- Don't smoke. If you smoke, quit.
- Limit alcohol as advised by your doctor.
- Exercise regularly.
- Manage stress.
- Get your blood pressure checked at each office visit, at least every 2 years, or as often as your doctor advises.



Self-Care

With prevention (above):

- Take medicine(s) as prescribed.
- Follow the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Eating Plan. Access www.nhlbi.nih.gov. Search for DASH Eating Plan.

Call Doctor For:

- Frequent headaches or nosebleeds
- Side effects, such as dizziness, from taking medicine for high blood pressure

9. Stroke Signs

♥ Get Immediate Care For:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

10. Immunizations

Immunization	Age 50 – 65	Age 65 +
Tetanus/diphtheria (Td) vaccine	Every 10 years	
Influenza (flu) vaccine	Every year	
Pneumococcal (pneumonia) vaccine	Discuss with provider	Once at age 65

Ask your doctor if you need additional immunizations (e.g., Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and/or chicken pox).

For Information, Contact:

National Institute on Aging (NIA)
800.222.2225 or www.nih.gov/nia

For free health information access the American Institute for Preventive Medicine's Web site: www.HealthyLife.com and click on "Online Products / 365 Health Topics."

11. Tests & Exams

Test or Exam	Ages 50 – 70	Age 70 +
Dental Checkup	Every year	
Physical Exam	Every 1 to 2 years	
Blood Pressure	At least every 2 years	
Vision/Glaucoma Screening	Every 2 to 3 years	
Cholesterol Blood Test	Every 5 years or as advised	
Pap Test	W	At least every 3 years. As advised after age 65.
Chlamydia Screening	O	Discuss with doctor
Mammogram	M	Every 1 to 2 years
Breast Self-Exam ¹	E	Discuss with doctor
Clinical Breast Exam	N	Every year
Testicular Self-Exam	M	Discuss with doctor
Digital Rectal Exam	E	Discuss with doctor
Colorectal Cancer Screening ²	N	Discuss with doctor

1. Though rare, men can get breast cancer, too, and should look for and report a breast change to their doctor.
2. Screening test options include a stool blood test, sigmoidoscopy, double contrast barium enema, and colonoscopy. How often testing is needed depends on the test(s) given.

Note: Follow your doctor's or health care provider's advice for tests and exams.