

March 8, 2005

## Health Mailbox

Columnist Tara Parker-Pope answers readers' questions.  
*March 8, 2005; Page D5*

**Q:** Where does one find a doctor who recommends therapy and exercise instead of back surgery?

-- L.G.

**A:** It can be tough for a patient suffering from back pain to find a doctor who doesn't suggest surgery first. Nonsurgical remedies for back pain take far more time and are typically less lucrative than surgery. I would suggest you seek the advice of a physiatrist. These doctors, who sometimes refer to themselves as sports-medicine specialists, help patients avoid surgery by focusing on rehabilitation and restoring function. Physiatrists can be found through most orthopedic hospitals or specialized spine or sports-medicine practices. To learn more about the specialty and how to find a doctor go to [www.aapmr.org](http://www.aapmr.org)<sup>4</sup>, the Web site for the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Some spine specialists, such as those at the Spine Center at New England Baptist Hospital in Boston as well as the Physicians Neck and Back Center in Minneapolis, are prescribing aggressive exercise and strengthening programs to rehabilitate injured backs. One way to find a center near you is to go to [www.medxonline.com](http://www.medxonline.com)<sup>5</sup>, the Web site for exercise equipment maker MedX, and click on "facility locator" at the top of the screen, to find practices that use the firm's medical exercise equipment. Some, but not all, insurance plans will cover the cost.

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