
Low back pain is a common problem. Low back pain is most often caused by strain on bones, muscles and ligaments. It usually gets better after a few weeks of treatment.

Good care begins with a physical exam by your doctor.

Simple tests in your doctor's office may:

- Locate the pain.
- Rule out a serious problem.

Low back pain can be treated with:

- Medicines for pain.
- Heating pads.
- Exercise or physical therapy.

Reduce your risk of low back pain by:

- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Exercising regularly.
- Lifting heavy objects carefully.

Ask Your Doctor about different treatment options for your low back pain.

Tell Your Doctor if you are having:

- Weight loss.
- Fevers.
- Weakness in your legs.
- Loss of feeling in your legs.
- Other symptoms not related to your back.

Other tests may be done if:

- Your pain does not improve.
- Your pain gets worse.
- Your doctor thinks the pain is from a serious medical condition not a strain.

Radiology tests such as x-rays, CT scans and MRI's for low back pain:

- Usually do not show anything that would change the first treatment plan.
- Often show problems that have nothing to do with low back pain.
- Expose you to radiation.
- May lead to further unnecessary tests and procedures.

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor:

- What are the risks in getting radiology tests? _____
- How will my doctor treat my low back pain if I do not get radiology tests? _____
- What kind of non-prescription medicines should I take? _____
- Will I be able to take pain medicines with my other medicines? _____
- How long should I wait to call my doctor if the pain does not go away? _____
- What are the next steps in treating my low back pain? _____