

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LOW BACK PAIN

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

Many people have low back pain at some time in their lives. Back pain is rarely caused by a serious health condition. It often gets better within a few days or weeks. Low back pain can become chronic, meaning that it comes and goes over months or years.

If you have low back pain:

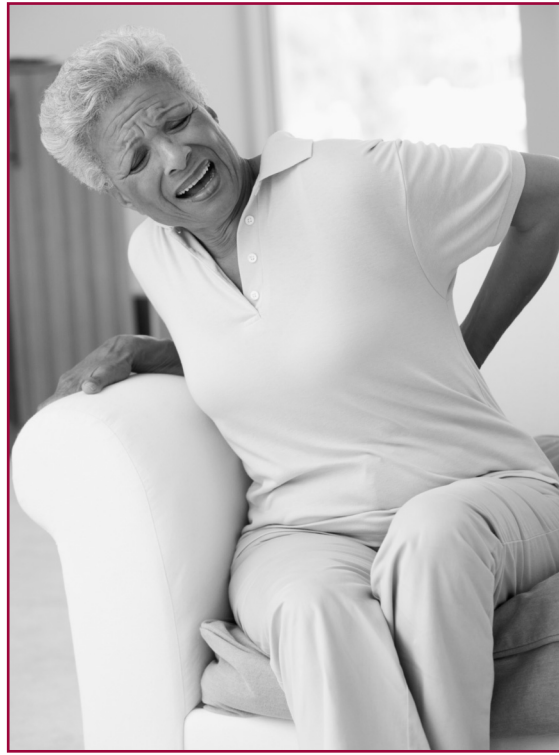
- Do not lift heavy things or do strenuous activity.
- Try to keep doing everyday activities and walking, even if it hurts.
- Do not stay in bed longer than 1–2 days because it can make your recovery slower.

To help you feel better, try some of these things at home:

- Medicines from the drug store to reduce pain (acetaminophen or ibuprofen—read the labels).
- Heating pads or hot showers.
- Massage.

See a doctor if:

- Pain runs down the leg below the knee.
- The leg, foot, groin, or rectal area feels numb.
- Fever, nausea or vomiting, stomachache, weakness, or sweating occurs.
- Bowel or bladder control is lost.
- Pain was caused by an injury.
- Pain is so bad you cannot move around.
- Pain does not seem to be getting better after 2–3 weeks.



For More Information

www.annals.org/cgi/reprint/147/7/478.pdf
Patient summary of guideline from the American College of Physicians and the American Pain Society on the diagnosis and treatment of low back pain.

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/backpain.html
MedlinePlus.

www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/backpain/backpain.htm
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/low-back-pain.html> Tool Kit
American Academy of Family Physicians (information available in English and Spanish).

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