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Patient *focus*

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ACCESS TO CARE PATIENTS

Pain felt in your back may come from your spine, muscles, nerves or other structures in this region. You may feel a variety of symptoms if you've hurt your back.

Your Guide to Low Back Pain

You may have a tingling or burning sensation, a dull aching, or sharp pain. You may also experience weakness in your legs or feet. It won't necessarily be one event that actually causes your pain. You may have been doing many things improperly, like standing, sitting, or lifting for a long time. Then suddenly, one simple movement like reaching for something or bending your waist leads to pain.

Although frustrating, many people feel better within one week after the start of back pain. After another 4 – 6 weeks, the back pain will likely be completely gone. To improve your symptoms and find relief sooner, follow these steps:

1. Bed rest is NOT recommended
2. Stop normal physical activity for the first few days and do NOT perform activities that involve heavy lifting or twisting your back for 6 weeks after onset of pain

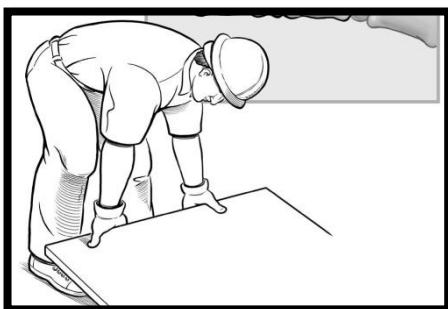
3. Gradually resume light exercise after 2-3 weeks, training too hard can make pain worse
4. Apply ice for the first 48-72 hours of the onset of pain, then apply gentle heat
5. Take over the counter pain medication including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol)
6. While sleeping, lie in a curled up, fetal position with a pillow between your legs. If you sleep on your back, place a pillow under your knees to relieve pressure

After the first time you have had low back pain, its not uncommon for the symptoms to return. Here are some things you can do to avoid that from happening:

- Practice good posture when you sit, stand, and walk.
- Get regular, low-impact exercise. Walk, swim, or ride a stationary bike. Stretch before you exercise.

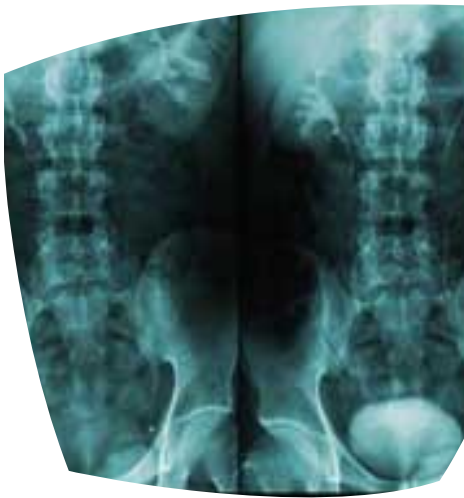


- Wear low-heeled shoes with good support.
- Watch your weight. Being too heavy, especially around your waist, puts extra stress on your back.
- Don't try to lift things that are too heavy for you and use your knees when you lift NOT your back.
- When sitting, sit up straight, with your shoulders back.
- Make sure your chair has good back support.
- Talk to your human resources department to see if there are other ways you can do your work, without bending, reaching, or lifting.



RISKS FOR BACKPAIN

Risks for back pain include smoking, poor diet, lack of exercise, being overweight, poor posture, pregnancy, stress, depression, low pain tolerance, arthritis, osteoporosis, age over 30, work that involves heavy lifting. Reducing, eliminating, or managing these risk factors will help to alleviate your pain and prevent it from recurring.



DO I NEED AN X-RAY?

Most people do not need further testing. Imaging tests such as X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs are not helpful for diagnosing most episodes of low back pain. In most cases, they are only used if the doctor suspects a serious problem.

Imaging tests such as X-rays, CT Scans and MRI's can be very expensive costing hundreds even thousands of dollars. Many times a physician is able to provide excellent patient care without such studies and preventing unnecessary use of hospital resources.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

CERTAIN FINDINGS ARE INDICATIONS FOR FURTHER EVALUATION. IF YOU HAVE OR BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS, PLEASE INFORM YOUR PHYSICIAN



- History of Cancer
- Unexplained weight loss
- Resting or night pain
- Fever
- IV drug use
- Recent infection
- Trouble emptying your bladder
- Trouble controlling bowel movements
- Loss of sensation, especially in the buttock or groin area
- History of Osteoporosis
- Use of corticosteroids
- Recent trauma
- Abdominal pulsating mass
- Significant or Progressive muscle weakness