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Low Back Pain in Family Practice

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How is Back Pain Treated?

If your back pain requires treatment, the pain may be initially treated with a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) like ibuprofen or alternatively acetaminophen. Sometimes muscle relaxants or other pain reducing medications are used when appropriate.

Narcotic or opioid pain medications are avoided for long term pain control. They do not control long term pain better than NSAIDs and they have significant side effects, and are highly addictive.

In many cases, you may be referred to physical therapy. Physical therapy can help reduce your pain and also prevent it from coming back in the future. Physical therapists have many tools to help people with back pain.

How do I avoid having my Back Pain return?

Stay Active!

Staying active is one of the best things you can do for your back.

Too much rest can actually slow down healing. Staying active helps keep your back muscles strong. This will help healing and decrease your pain.

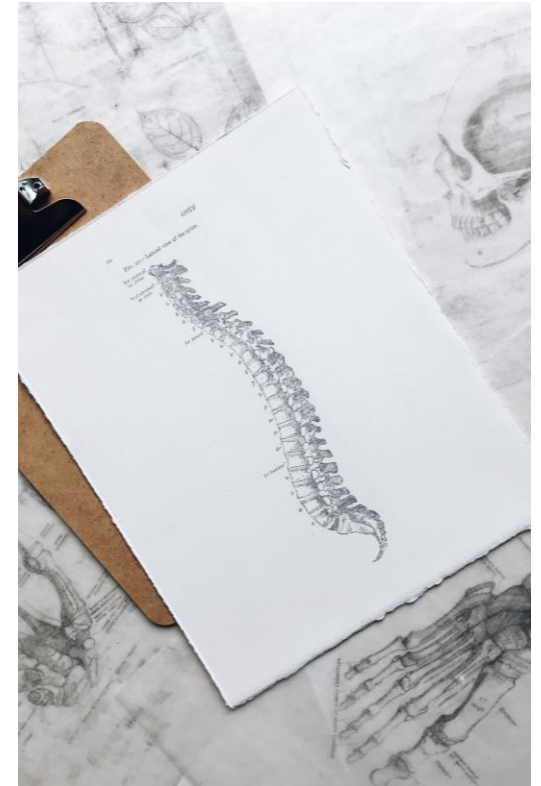
A stronger back is less likely to get re-injured or to start hurting again.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is key for helping your back to heal and to stay strong in the long run.

Physical therapists have a variety of tools and techniques to help your muscles and joints to get stronger, more flexible and healthier.

You may be given home exercises to do by your therapist. Making sure you do these is one of the most important things you can do for your future back health.



LOW BACK PAIN

Patient information

What Causes Back Pain?

Most commonly back pain is caused by a **Muscle strain or sprain.**

- Muscle injuries are most common after trauma or from frequent use such as heavy lifting.
- Muscle pain is relieved by rest.
- Your back may be tender and hard to move due to tight and painful muscles.

Other less common causes include:

Spondylosis

- Age related wear and tear including arthritis.
- Pain is worse with activities and may impact your hips.

Disk Herniation

- Disks are cushions between the spinal bones.
- Sometimes they can bulge out and push on a nerve.
- The pain may go down your legs.
- You may also feel numbness or tingling.

Who Gets Back Pain?

Low back pain is one of the most common conditions today.

In fact, up to 85% of people get low back pain at some point during their lifetime.

“In my work [as a Physical Therapist] about 50% of my patients of have back pain. It can be anyone young or old.”



How is Back Pain Evaluated

Your doctor will ask you about your back pain and will want to know about: any injury/trauma, timing, location, pain in other areas,

Make sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have had any bowel or bladder issues
- Numbness especially in your inner thighs or groin,
- Weakness in your legs

Imaging

In most cases your doctor will not need to have you get an X-ray or MRI. In most cases they do not help find out why you have pain.

If your symptoms have been present for more than 6 weeks, have continued to get worse or are severe your doctor may order and X-ray and sometimes an MRI.