

Low back pain

Has your lower back been bothering you? If so, you are not alone. Low back pain is common, and affects almost everyone at some point in their life. But it can also be treated—and you can feel better!

What causes low back pain?

Known causes include:

- Lifting, reaching, or twisting
- Overuse, strain, or injury
- Aging
- Herniated disc
- Arthritis
- Compression fractures
- Illness
- A spine problem you were born with

What are the symptoms?

The pain may be dull or sharp. You may have muscle spasms, or even leg symptoms, such as pain, numbness, or tingling. Most low back pain is short-term and will go away in a few weeks. Long-lasting back pain is sometimes linked with depression or stress.

How is it treated?

Most low back pain will improve with light exercise such as walking, and taking over-the-counter pain medicine as needed. You may also want to do some simple core exercises to strengthen your trunk, or torso. This can improve your posture, keep your body in better balance, and lower your chance of injury. In some cases, spinal manipulation, massage, or acupuncture may be helpful. You might also want to try applying ice or heat.



Walking is the simplest and maybe the best exercise for the lower back. It gets your blood moving and helps your muscles stay strong.

See other side for tips on preventing low back pain

How to help prevent lower back pain



After you've had low back pain, you're likely to have it again. But there are things you can do to help prevent it. You might want to try some of these tips:



Practice good posture when you sit, stand, and walk. "Good posture" means your ears, shoulders, and hips are in a straight line



Get regular, low-impact exercise. Walk, swim, or ride a stationary bike. Stretch before you exercise



Sleep on your side



Watch your weight



Don't try to lift things that are too heavy. When you must lift, learn the right way to lift



At work, sit or stand up straight, with your shoulders back. Make sure your chair has good back support



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