

6 TIPS

for managing low back pain

1

Low back pain is one of the top 10 reasons someone visits their doctor. It can be caused by a variety of reasons, including age, occupation, pregnancy, injury, strains, skeletal irregularities, or osteoporosis.

2

Share your personal health history and family health history with your doctor to ensure appropriate testing. Tell your doctor about “red flags,” such as recent trauma, history of cancer, or loss of feeling/weakness/numbness in the lower limbs.

3

Many imaging studies have harmful radiation effects that can cause damage if too many unnecessary tests are done, and also add unnecessary costs without benefit.

4

Imaging tests, such as x-ray, CT or MRI, done less than four weeks from the onset of low back pain rarely improves pain and outcomes.

5

Consider trying these alternatives first:

- Stay active! Staying in bed won't help you get better faster. Walking and moving around help prevent muscles from stiffening, but don't overdo it with strenuous activities.
- Apply heat to ease comfort.
- Adjust your sleeping position and also your sitting position (Get up and move every 30 minutes). Putting a pillow between your legs when sleeping on your side or a pillow under your knees when sleeping on your back can reduce back discomfort.
- Use over-the-counter pain relievers recommended by your doctor.
- Consider physical therapy, massage or other pain relief supportive measures.

6

Exercise is the best way to relieve low back pain, strengthen your low back and abdominal muscles, and prevent future attacks. Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

If pain persists or worsens, contact your primary care physician.

This health alert is brought to you by:



Source: ChoosingWisely.org; American Academy of Family Physicians, Michigan Quality Improvement Consortium

These items are provided solely for informational purposes and are not intended as a substitute for consultation with a medical professional. Patients with any specific questions about the items on this list or their individual health should consult their physician.

