

Understanding, Relieving & Treating Low Back Pain



More than 80% of people in the United States experience an episode of low back pain during their lives. Most cases of low back pain can be linked to muscle strain, injury or overuse. A smaller percent of low back pain can be caused by more specific conditions of the spine that your doctor can diagnose and explain further.

The good news

Most low back pain resolves with self-management without long-term functional impact.

50% of back pain resolves within 1 week

Up to 80% resolves within 8 weeks

Where can you get help?

You have options! Reaching out to one of the following when you notice pain will help get you feeling better faster.

Doctor/Clinic

Nurse line ■ Send a message
Video visit ■ Appointment

Physical Therapist

Appointment

What can help?

- Stay active by gradually progressing toward your normal level of activity as tolerated.
- Avoid prolonged bedrest, sitting, driving, bending, heavy lifting and twisting in the early stages of pain.
- Gentle exercise for mobility and stretching of the muscles of the legs and back early on can help decrease the severity, duration and recurrence of low back pain. Try the suggested exercises on the back of this sheet. Avoid exercises that increase your pain.
- Apply ice to lower back for 10 – 15 minutes every 1 – 2 hours—ice is helpful in reducing pain and muscle spasm.
- Try short term, over the counter pain relievers like Tylenol or Ibuprofen.
- Get good sleep and reduce stress.
- Use good posture while sitting, lifting and sleeping.
- Wear supportive shoes which can align your legs, knees and back and help reduce shock while walking or running.
- Once the severity of pain has decreased, you can help prevent recurrence with a regular exercise program that includes strengthening your abdominals, back and hips.

Check back with your care team after 4 – 6 weeks, or sooner if you have questions or concerns. Keep them in the loop!



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When to seek emergency assistance:

- You experience weakness in your legs
- You develop a fever
- You have difficulty controlling your bladder or bowels
- You are unsteady on your feet



Education video

valleymed.org/lowbackpain

Knee to Chest Stretch

2 x 30 second hold, 2x/day



Using your hands, slowly pull one knee toward your chest until you feel a gentle stretch in your lower back.
*Can also perform pulling both knees toward your chest at the same time.

Tip: Make sure to keep your back relaxed and flat on the ground during the stretch.

Lower Trunk Rotation

10 repetitions, 2x/day



Keeping your back flat, slowly rotate your knees down toward the floor until you feel a gentle stretch, repeat to the other direction.

Tip: Make sure that your back and shoulders stay in contact with the floor.

Piriformis Stretch

2 x 30 second hold, 2x/day



Crossing your ankle over the opposite knee, pull your knee toward your opposite shoulder until you feel a stretch in the buttocks.

Tip: Do not allow your back to twist or bend excessively during the stretch.

Sleep Positions



Lying on Your Back



Lying on Your Side

If you would like additional guidance or have trouble performing these exercises, consider consulting with a physical therapist. If you experience increasing or severe pain while completing these exercises, please discontinue and contact your physician.

Rehabilitation Services

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