

What you should know about **Low Back Pain**

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine
annals.org

Many people have low back pain at some time in their lives. Back pain is rarely caused by a serious health condition. It often gets better within a few days or weeks. Low back pain can become chronic, meaning that it comes and goes over months to years.

If you have low back pain:

- Do not lift heavy things or do strenuous activity
- Try to keep doing everyday activities and walking, even if it hurts
- Do not stay in bed longer than 1 to 2 days, because it can make your recovery slower

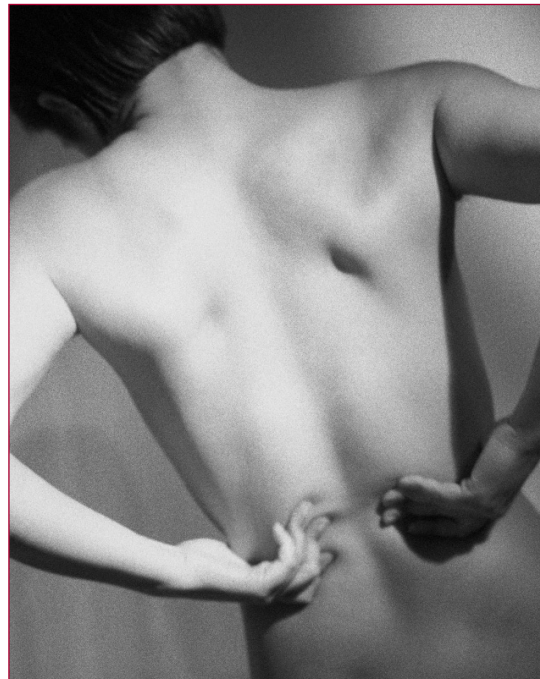
To help you feel better, try some of these things at home:

- Medicines from the drug store to reduce pain, (acetaminophen, ibuprofen—read the labels)
- Heating pads or hot showers
- Massage

See a doctor if:

- Pain runs down the leg below the knee
- The leg, foot, groin, or rectal area feels numb
- Fever, nausea or vomiting, stomachache, weakness, or sweating occurs
- Bowel or bladder control is lost
- Pain was caused by an injury
- Pain is so bad you can't move around
- Pain doesn't seem to be getting better after 2 to 3 weeks

The American College of Physicians and the American Pain Society published guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of low back pain in December 2007. For a "Summary for Patients" of these guidelines go to www.annals.org/cgi/reprint/147/7/478.pdf



For More Information

MedlinePlus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/backpain.html>

The Arthritis Foundation

http://ww2.arthritis.org/conditions/DiseaseCenter/back_pain.asp

National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/backpain/backpain.htm>

American Academy of Family Physicians (information available in English and Spanish)

<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdoces/home/common/pain/treatment/117.html>

ACP

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | Doctors for Adults®