

# LOW BACK PAIN

## What is Low Back Pain?

Low back pain is pain and stiffness in the lower back that usually involves muscle spasms of the supportive muscles along the spine. The spine is made up of a column of bones (vertebrae) with a cushioning disc between each. The bones and discs are held in place by ligaments and muscles. All of these can become stretched, damaged or move out of place, causing pain.

## What are the symptoms?

- Pain and stiffness in the lower back
- Numbness and tingling in the buttocks or lower extremities
- Difficulty standing or sitting for a prolonged period of time

## How is it treated?

It is important to rest from aggravating activity and avoid prolonged sitting, driving, bending, heavy lifting and twisting. However, bed rest is not recommended for simple low back pain.

Ice applied to the low back for 15 minutes every 1-2 hours is helpful in reducing pain and spasm. Avoid using heat for the first 48 hours of an acute injury.

Gentle exercise for mobility and stretching can help decrease the severity, duration and recurrence of low back pain. Do not perform exercises that increase your pain.

Your healthcare provider may prescribe

medications to treat acute low back pain including:

- Non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)
- Muscle relaxers
- Corticosteroids

## **What causes Low Back Pain?**

There are multiple causes of low back pain:

- Muscle strain
- Ligament sprain
- Poor posture
- Age
- Disc bulge
- Osteoporosis and other degenerative diseases
- Other causes (bladder/kidney infection, endometriosis, cancer, or ovarian problems)

## **How is Low Back Pain prevented?**

There are several ways to help prevent low back pain. These include:

- Maintain good posture
- Avoid long periods of sitting or standing and change positions regularly
- Use proper lifting and body mechanics
- Follow an approved strengthening program
- Weight loss if indicated



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