

Managing Low Back Pain



Low back pain can significantly disrupt your daily life. The good news is that most new-onset low back pain improves over time, even without any treatment at all. There is typically no need for expensive tests or therapies, and imaging such as X-ray or MRI is unlikely to change your treatment or improve your outcomes.

So how can you get back to normal as quickly as possible?

Stay Active

- Continue as much of your regular activity as you can tolerate. Avoid heavy lifting, but most movement is safe.
- Limit bedrest to a few hours at a time for only a day or two. Bedrest won't help you get better faster and might delay your recovery by causing you to lose strength.

Apply Heat

- Apply heat for 15 to 20 minutes every few hours while awake.
- Moist heat (hot packs, baths, showers) might work better than dry heat (heating pads).
- Avoid burns by setting heating pads to low or medium. Use automatic shutoff or a timer with an alarm in case you fall asleep.

Over-the-Counter Pain Relievers

Ibuprofen 200 mg (May be store brand, Advil, or Motrin)

Take ____ tablet(s) by mouth every _____ hrs as needed

OR

Naproxen 220 mg (May be store brand or Aleve)

Take ____ tablet(s) by mouth every _____ hrs as needed

Acetaminophen 325 mg (May be store brand or Tylenol)

Take ____ tablet(s) every _____ hours as needed for pain

- Ask your pharmacist to help you select the correct product.
- Read the *Drug Facts* label on each pain relief product to ensure you do not exceed the maximum daily dose.

Call us at _____ if your low back pain:

- Is getting worse despite the measures listed above.
- Spreads down or causes weakness, numbness, or tingling in one or both legs.
- Causes you to have difficulty with urinating or bowel movements.
- Is not getting better after ____ days.

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