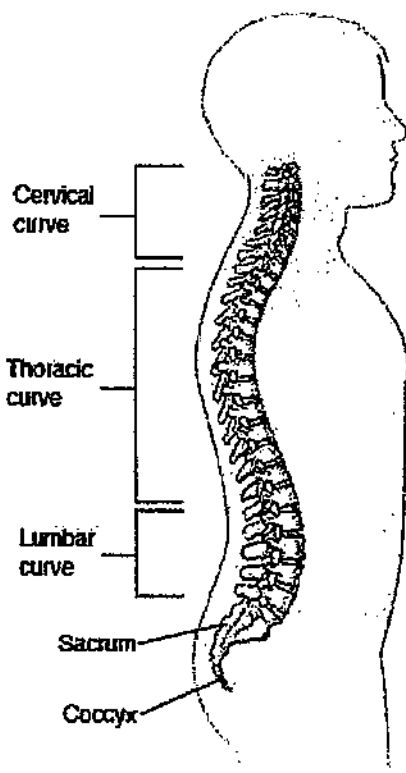


## Back Pain [Acute Or Chronic]



Back pain is usually caused by an injury to the muscles or ligaments of the spine. Sometimes the disks that separate each bone in the spine may bulge and cause pain by pressing on a nearby nerve. Back pain may also appear after a sudden twisting/bending force (such as in a car accident), after a simple awkward movement, or lifting something heavy with poor body positioning. In either case, muscle spasm is often present and adds to the pain.

Acute back pain usually gets better in one to two weeks. Back pain related to disk disease, arthritis in the spinal joints or spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal) can become chronic and last for months or years.

Unless you had a physical injury (for example, a car accident or fall) X-rays are usually not ordered for the initial evaluation of back pain. If pain continues and does not respond to medical treatment, x-rays and other tests may be performed at a later time.

### Home Care:

1. You may need to stay in bed the first few days. But, as soon as possible, begin sitting or walking to avoid problems with prolonged bed rest (muscle weakness, worsening back stiffness and pain, blood clots in the legs).

2. When in bed, try to find a position of comfort. A firm mattress is best. Try lying flat on your back with pillows under your knees. You can also try lying on your side with your knees bent up towards your chest and a pillow between your knees.
3. Avoid prolonged sitting. This puts more stress on the lower back than standing or walking.
4. During the first two days after injury, apply an ICE PACK to the painful area for 20 minutes every 2-4 hours. This will reduce swelling and pain. HEAT (hot shower, hot bath or heating pad) works well for muscle spasm. You can start with ice, then switch to heat after two days. Some patients feel best alternating ice and heat treatments. Use the one method that feels the best to you.
5. You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) to control pain, unless another pain medicine was prescribed. [NOTE: If you have chronic liver or kidney disease or ever had a stomach ulcer or GI bleeding, talk with your doctor before using these medicines.]
6. Be aware of safe lifting methods and do not lift anything over 15 pounds until all the pain is gone.

## Follow Up

with your doctor or this facility if your symptoms do not start to improve after one week. Physical therapy may be needed.

[NOTE: If X-rays were taken, they will be reviewed by a radiologist. You will be notified of any new findings that may affect your care.]

## Get Prompt Medical Attention

if any of the following occur:

- Pain becomes worse or spreads to your legs
- Weakness or numbness in one or both legs
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Numbness in the groin or genital area

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# Exercises To Strengthen Your Lower Back

Strong lower-back and abdominal muscles work together to support your spine. These exercises will help strengthen the muscles of the lower back. It is important that you begin exercising slowly and increase levels gradually.

Always begin any exercise program with stretching. If you feel pain while doing any of these exercises, stop and talk to your doctor about a more specific exercise program that suits your condition better.

## Low Back Stretch

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and both feet on the ground.
- Slowly raise your left knee to your chest as you flatten your lower back against the floor. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Relax and repeat the exercise with your right knee.
- Do 10 of these exercises for each leg.
- Repeat hugging both knees to your chest at the same time.

## Building Lower Back Strength

1. **Kneeling Lumbar Extension:** Begin on your hands and knees. Simultaneously raise and straighten your right arm and left leg until they are parallel to the ground. Hold for 2 seconds and come back slowly to a starting position. Repeat with left arm and right leg, alternating 10 times.
2. **Prone Lumbar Extension:** Lie face down, arms extended overhead, palms on the floor. Simultaneously raise your right arm and left leg as high as comfortably possible. Hold for 10 seconds and slowly return to start. Repeat with left arm and right leg, alternating 10 times. Gradually build up to 20 times. (Advanced: Repeat this exercise raising both arms and both legs a few inches off the floor at the same time. Hold for 5 seconds and release.)
3. **Pelvic Tilt:** Lie on the floor on your back with your knees bent at 90 degrees. Your feet should be flat on the floor. Inhale, exhale, then slowly contract your abdominal muscles bringing your navel toward your spine. Let your pelvis rock back until your lower back is flat on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds while breathing smoothly.
4. **Abdominal Crunch:** Perform a Pelvic Tilt (above) flattening your lower back against the floor. Holding the tension in your abdominal muscles, take another breath and raise your shoulder blades off the ground (this is not a full sit-up). Keep your head in line with your body (don't bend your neck forward). Hold for 2 seconds, then slowly lower.

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