

## Low Back Pain

### *Self-care*

*This handout explains low back pain and what to do about it.*

More than 80% of people (80 out of 100 people) in the United States have low back pain at some point. This pain is usually caused by muscle strain, injury, or overuse.

Most times, low back pain does **not** mean you have serious tissue damage. But, some low back pain can be caused by spine problems. If this is true for you, your doctor will explain more.

With proper care, 95% of cases (95 out of 100 cases) of low back pain get better in a few months.

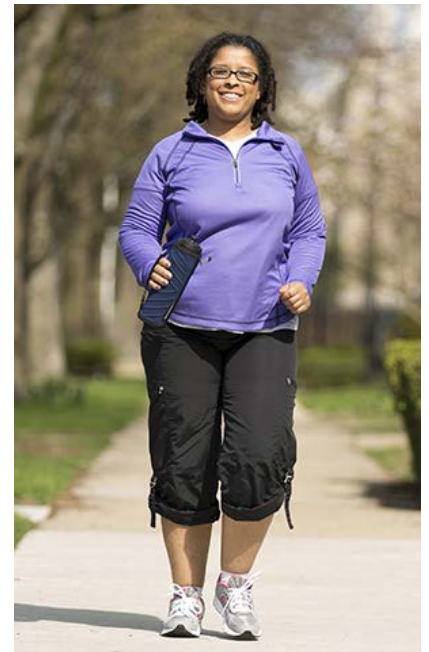
### When You Have Low Back Pain

- **Stay active.** Increase your activities as you are able to handle it. Staying in bed for more than a day can slow your recovery.
- **Avoid** sitting or driving for more than 30 minutes at a time. Also avoid bending, heavy lifting, and twisting.

### How to Prevent Low Back Pain

It is common for low back pain to return. Here are some tips to keep the pain from coming back:

- Once your pain has eased, start a regular **exercise** program. Include exercises that strengthen your abdominal muscles, back, and hips. When these muscles are strong, low back pain is less likely.
- Use **proper** lifting methods. When lifting, bend your knees and try to lift with your legs. Do **not** twist your body while lifting.
- Be aware of your **posture**. Stand up straight and do not slump when sitting.



*Start a regular exercise program as soon as you can.*

## Physical Therapy

If it has been 1 to 2 weeks since your pain began and you are still having problems with pain or doing your normal activities, ask your doctor for a referral to a physical therapist (PT). Your PT will create an exercise program for you to do at home to help you reduce your pain and gain strength.

## When to Call

Call your doctor right away or go to the Emergency Room if you:

- Cannot stand or walk
- Have a fever higher than 100.4°F (38.0°C)
- See blood in your urine or have pain when you urinate (pee)
- Have numbness in your legs or groin
- Have problems controlling your bowels or bladder

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

---

---