


## Low Back Pain

Patient Information	
<p><b>What is low back pain</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lower back starts below the ribcage.</li> <li>• Pain in this area can range from a dull ache to a stabbing pain.</li> </ul>  <p>Image: Keele University (n.d.)</p>
<p><b>What causes low back pain</b></p>	<p>Low back pain can be caused by many things. Some common causes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injury from a fall or accident</li> <li>• Bending, lifting, or twisting over and over</li> <li>• Lifting heavy items</li> <li>• Staying in one position too long (e.g. driving, standing, or sitting)</li> <li>• Lack of regular exercise</li> <li>• Being overweight</li> <li>• Being pregnant</li> <li>• Aging</li> <li>• Bad posture</li> </ul>
<p><b>How is it diagnosed</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your provider will ask you about your medical history and do a physical exam.</li> <li>• You will be asked to describe the area of the pain, and what it feels like.</li> <li>• Sometimes the provider may order an imaging test for you (e.g. x-ray, CT scan, MRI, etc.) but this is not usually needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How is it treated</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-inflammatory medicines help to reduce swelling and pain. Take them as directed on the bottle, or by your provider.</li> <li>• Pain medicines: Over-the-counter pain relievers like Tylenol® can help to control discomfort. Take them as directed on the bottle, or by your provider. You may also have a narcotic or muscle relaxer prescribed if needed.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice can help your low back pain during the first 24-48 hours. Use it on your back for about 15-20 minutes every hour or as directed by your provider. Don't put the ice pack directly on your skin; always put a towel around it first.</li> <li>• After 48 hours, you can use heat can help your low back pain. Use it for 20-30 minutes every 2 hours or as directed by your provider.</li> <li>• If your provider ordered physical therapy (PT), be sure to go to the appointments and do the exercises they teach you. This will help you to get better, and may help to prevent low back pain in the future.</li> <li>• Keep moving, but don't overdo it. Bedrest can make your pain worse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How can I keep from having back pain in the future</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use good body mechanics, especially when lifting.</li> <li>• Watch your posture. Slouching can make low back pain worse.</li> <li>• Control your weight. Being overweight puts more strain on your back.</li> <li>• Stay active. Exercises that keep your core strong help support your back. Studies have been done that show that yoga helps people with low back pain.</li> <li>• Don't sit for long periods of time without getting up and stretching.</li> <li>• Avoid wearing heels over 1-inch high.</li> </ul>

Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. (2018). Retrieved from [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov)

**For more information about low back pain, talk to your provider.**