

YOUR VALUES
YOUR PREFERENCES
YOUR CHOICE

Allina Health 

Considering Your Options for Low Back Pain

Self-Care, Spinal Manipulation, Physical Therapy and Acupuncture



Your Options

Low back pain is common. It can be short-term (acute) or long-lasting (chronic). This pain may interfere with your everyday activities, walking, physical activity, leisure and work.

If you have low back pain, you may have many treatment options. You may try self-care on its own or with other options, such as spinal manipulation or physical therapy. The options available to you will depend on your needs. You may choose to use one or more of the following:

- self-care (see pages 4 and 6)
- spinal manipulation (see pages 5 and 6)
- physical therapy (see pages 5 and 7)
- acupuncture (see pages 5 and 7).

Together, you and your health care provider will decide what options are safe for you and decide how to best treat your low back pain. This decision will be based on the benefits and risks of each option and your values and preferences. You can change your mind at any time. Talk with your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Important: If you have not talked to a health care provider about your low back pain, wait to start any new treatment. Talk with your health care provider about your pain.

Before talking with your health care provider, you may begin using self-care activities you feel comfortable starting. If an activity causes new or increased pain or discomfort, stop. Talk with your health care provider about your pain.

Other Options

Your health care provider may talk with you about other treatments such as injections and prescription medicine. This will depend on:

- when your low back pain began
- the cause of your pain
- the treatment options you have used and how well they worked
- your values, needs and preferences.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you have:

- new back pain or pain that gets worse
- tried self-care, spinal manipulation, physical therapy or a combination of these for 2 to 4 weeks and your back pain does not improve
- a serious injury that causes new back pain (fall, car accident, sports injury)
- fever or unexplained weight loss
- loss of bowel or bladder control
- severe numbness, tingling, pain or weakness in an arm or leg that gets worse or spreads
- loss of feeling in your anal or genital area
- severe pain at night or pain that gets worse when you lie down
- questions about your pain, medicines or treatment.

Understanding Low Back Pain

Causes

Your back is composed of the spine (vertebrae), discs, spinal cord, nerves, ligaments and muscles. A back injury, spine disorder or disease may affect one or more of these parts and can cause pain. It is common to have back pain without an injury or spine disorder.

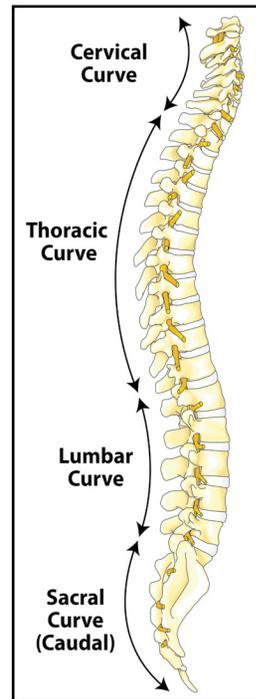
The cause of low back pain cannot be determined with certainty. This is true even if you know the event that caused pain such as a fall or car accident.

Back pain is produced when the nerves in the low back, along with the spinal cord and brain, sense danger. Pain alerts you that something is wrong. This can be caused by many things such as stress, or lack of exercise or movement.

Low back pain often results from many causes.

Tests

Most of the time, tests are not necessary and do not help with treatment. Your health care provider will give you an exam to check for serious conditions. Depending on your exam and health history, your health care provider will talk with you about what tests they think you should have. These tests include MRIs, X-rays and EMG studies.



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Labeled parts of your spinal column.

Recovery

Nine out of 10 people with short-term low back pain will feel better within 6 weeks, no matter what treatments they use. The pain may come back a few times during the year.

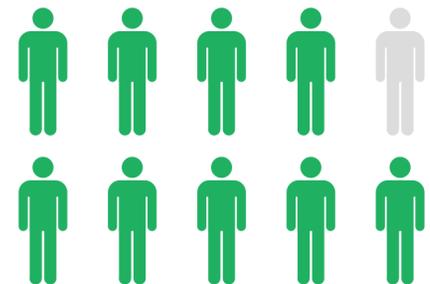
If you have long-term low back pain, it may never fully go away. The goal is to find treatment options that let you manage your pain so you can be active every day.

Your recovery may be faster and more complete if you stay active and do as many of your everyday activities as you can (exercise, work, shop).

Spending too much time lying down or sitting in one position can cause muscle cramps or soreness. It can also affect your mental health. Follow your health care provider's directions so the pain doesn't get worse.

Recovery From Short-Term Low Back Pain

- Recover within 6 weeks
- Do not recover within 6 weeks



About 9 out of 10 people with short-term low back pain feel better within 6 weeks, no matter what type of treatment is used.

Treatment Options

Self-care

Self-care is an important way to manage your back pain. Self-care includes treatment options you can do on your own. Your goal is to return to your normal activities as soon as possible.

Taking an active role in managing your back pain is the most important thing you can do to feel better faster.

Check with your insurance provider about coverage for self-care activities.

Some types of self-care include:

mild aerobic exercise

These are physical activities you do to stay active and strengthen your muscles. These activities include walking, swimming, pool exercises and tai chi.

heat or warm pack

Heat or a warm pack reduces pain by causing your blood vessels to open. This increases oxygen flow to help ease stiff joints and sore muscles.

Use heat or a warm pack no more than one time every hour for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Place a clean, dry towel between your skin and the heat or warm pack. If the area starts to feel numb, this option is not right for you. Don't use heat or a warm pack on an area that has a wound.

ice or cold pack

Ice or a cold pack reduces discomfort and swelling (inflammation) by numbing nerve endings.

Use ice or a cold pack no more than one time every hour for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Place a clean, dry towel between your skin and the ice or cold pack.

medicine

Over-the-counter pain relief medicines may reduce your pain. This type of medicine includes ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®), aspirin or naproxen (Aleve®). If you can't take these, take acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Talk with your health care provider before starting any new medicine.

breathing and relaxation

Some easy breathing exercises can reduce pain. This helps increase blood flow to your muscles and lower your heart rate and blood pressure. Relaxation techniques are shown to increase mood and reduce feelings of stress.

therapeutic massage

This treats the skin and soft tissues of your body to promote relaxation and enhance health and healing. Massage helps to reduce pain, anxiety, muscle tension and stress.

yoga

This uses meditation, breathing techniques and gentle movement to relax your body and mind. Yoga helps to reduce pain and relax your muscles.

There are different types of yoga. If a yoga position causes new or increased pain or discomfort, stop. Talk with your health care provider about your pain. You may need to change your treatment plan.

get enough sleep

Get at least 7 hours of sleep each night. Getting enough sleep at night can help you be more alert during the day and help your body deal with pain.

quit using tobacco

Don't use tobacco products. They can slow your body's ability to heal, increase your risk of low back pain, make it more difficult to manage your pain and make other treatments less effective.

Treatment Options (continued)

Spinal Manipulation

Spinal manipulation can be done by a chiropractor or doctor of osteopathic medicine. Osteopathic medicine treats the whole body – not just what aches or hurts.

The doctor will use gentle hands-on adjustments to detect and treat pain. These adjustments may include stretching or applying gentle pressure and resistance in the area of pain. This may help lower pain and improve your movement.

Your doctor may:

- teach you lifestyle changes to improve your posture and movement (lifting, reaching, getting in and out of bed)
- teach you home exercises to increase your flexibility and improve the movement of your joints
- recommend other therapies to help your muscles, joints and nerves work properly and lower pain.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy uses different types of treatments that can help you feel better and move easier. It almost always includes exercises you will need to do after therapy is done.

The most common types of physical therapy are:

- **Traditional physical therapy:** you will use exercise, self-care and therapy. This can help decrease pain, improve your ability to move and manage symptoms of back pain.
- **Spine strengthening therapy:** you will use special equipment to strengthen the muscles around your spine. This can help improve your ability to move and manage symptoms of pain.
- **Pool therapy:** you will learn gentle exercises from a therapist in the pool. This can help to decrease your pain, improve your ability to move and manage symptoms of back pain.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a form of traditional Chinese medicine. It can help your body heal itself and reduce pain. It is done by a licensed acupuncturist.

The acupuncturists at Allina Health are certified by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and licensed by the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice.

Your acupuncturist will place fine, sterile needles through your skin into specific points in your body. The needles will stay in for about 15 to 30 minutes.

It is recommended you have 6 visits with your acupuncturist when you start treatment. Your first visit may vary from 60 to 90 minutes. Follow-up appointments are about 30 to 60 minutes.

Talk with your acupuncturist about other options they use to help treat low back pain.

Benefits and Risks

	Benefits	Risks
Self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ long-term or short-term pain relief ■ more active role in your treatment ■ no surgery or prescription medicine ■ helps your body heal and recover (increases oxygen flow, reduces swelling, and relaxes muscles) ■ makes you able to do more physical activities ■ releases endorphins (your body's natural pain relievers) ■ can start treatment as soon as back pain begins ■ may prevent back pain from happening again ■ may prevent or lessen chronic low back pain ■ get better faster ■ do treatment on your own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ incomplete or conflicting treatment plan if you don't tell your health care providers the self-care option(s) you are using ■ injury when doing a self-care activity wrong or without guidance
Spinal Manipulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ long-term or short-term pain relief ■ more active role in your treatment ■ no surgery or prescription medicine ■ helps your mind and body by using your body's natural ability to heal itself (allows your spine to move with less pain and increases communication between your brain, muscles and joints) ■ makes you able to do more physical activities ■ releases endorphins ■ learn ways to improve your body posture and manage your pain ■ may correct back alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ incomplete or conflicting treatment plan if you don't tell your health care providers you are using this option. <p>It is important to talk with your health care provider before you start or change the doses of vitamins or herbal or natural products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ short-term discomfort (feeling pain, tired or sore) in the area that was treated or away from the treated area

Benefits and Risks (continued)

	Benefits	Risks
Physical Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ long-term or short-term pain relief ■ more active role in your treatment ■ no surgery or prescription medicine ■ helps your body (builds muscle strength and increases your heart rate and blood flow) ■ makes you able to do more physical activities ■ releases endorphins ■ learn ways to improve your body posture and manage your pain ■ increased independence and safety during everyday activities ■ tailored treatment plan to fit your needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ incomplete or conflicting treatment plan if you don't tell your health care providers you are using this option ■ feeling tired or sore ■ short-term increase in pain
Acupuncture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ long-term or short-term pain relief ■ no surgery or prescription medicine ■ helps your mind and body by using your body's natural ability to heal itself (reduces stress in your body and relaxes your mind) ■ releases endorphins ■ tailored treatment plan to fit your needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ incomplete or conflicting treatment plan if you don't tell your health care providers you are using this option. <p>It is important to talk with your health care provider before you start or change the doses of vitamins or herbal or natural products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ short-term tingling, warmth or discomfort at the acupuncture points

Comparing Your Options

Check the box next to any important items you prefer to help you compare the options.

Your Options			
Self-care	Spinal Manipulation	Physical Therapy	Acupuncture
<input type="checkbox"/> do treatment on your own	<input type="checkbox"/> meet with a health care provider. May make lifestyle changes and do some exercises on your own.	<input type="checkbox"/> meet with a health care provider. May make lifestyle changes and do some exercises on your own.	<input type="checkbox"/> meet with a health care provider
<input type="checkbox"/> can start treatment as soon as back pain begins	<input type="checkbox"/> may not start treatment for several days after back pain begins	<input type="checkbox"/> may not start treatment for several days after back pain begins	<input type="checkbox"/> may not start treatment for several days after back pain begins
<input type="checkbox"/> can do treatment as many times as you need during the day	<input type="checkbox"/> fit spinal manipulation visits into your routine	<input type="checkbox"/> fit physical therapy sessions into your routine	<input type="checkbox"/> fit acupuncture visits into your routine
<input type="checkbox"/> may use self-care as needed before and after your pain is managed	<input type="checkbox"/> often have a specific number of spinal manipulation visits to manage your pain and may have visits as needed after your pain is managed	<input type="checkbox"/> often have a specific number of physical therapy sessions to manage your pain	<input type="checkbox"/> often have a specific number of acupuncture visits to manage your pain and may have acupuncture visits as needed after your pain is managed
<input type="checkbox"/> may use over-the-counter medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> may use vitamins, herbal or natural products, or both	<input type="checkbox"/> no medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> may use vitamins, herbal or natural products, or both

_____ = Total

_____ = Total

_____ = Total

_____ = Total

Count the number of boxes you checked. The options with the most checks may be the best options for you.

My Preferences

Questions	My Thoughts
As you think about the possible risks, what are your fears or concerns?	
As you think about your options, what are your hopes or goals?	
What matters to you most?	
Which of these options do you feel fit best with your treatment goals?	
Is there anything that may get in the way of you doing this?	

My Decision at This Time

self-care spinal manipulation physical therapy acupuncture medicine

Next Steps (continued)

Questions for Your Insurance Provider

It is important for you to understand your health care benefits before you begin treatment.

Please call your insurance provider and find out exactly what is and isn't covered under your plan, and how much you have to pay yourself. Look for the telephone number on your membership card.

1. Will this treatment be covered for my medical condition?
2. Are there specific requirements or criteria that my treatment or I must meet to receive coverage?
3. How long is this treatment covered?
4. Which health care providers are in network?
5. Does my health care provider need to monitor how well this treatment works for me to continue receiving coverage?
6. How much will I need to pay for this treatment?
7. Other questions: _____

Notes

Worksheet: Your Past Treatments for Low Back Pain

What treatments have you used?	When and how long have you used them?	How well have they worked?

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Allina Health does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, gender identity or sex.

English: ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-877-506-4595.

Spanish: ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-877-506-4595.

Hmong: LUS CEEV: Yog tias koj hais lus Hmoob, cov kev pab txog lus, muaj kev pab dawb rau koj. Hu rau 1-877-506-4595.



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