

Low Back Pain

DESCRIPTION

Low back pain is pain that occurs in the lumbo-sacral spine. The lumbar spine consists of five bones, called the lumbar vertebrae. Between adjacent vertebrae there is a disc, filled with jelly like material. The vertebrae, discs and associated muscles and ligaments are supplied with nerves. Disease or injury to these structures may cause low back pain.

CAUSES

- Back strain or sprains
- Ruptured discs
- Tension and emotional problems
- Poor posture
- Obesity
- Osteoarthritis
- Spondylosis (immobility of joint)
- Spondylolisthesis (sliding of one vertebra over the other)
- Miscellaneous: birth defects, scoliosis, prostate disease or kidney disease.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

First, stop whatever you were doing to cause the pain and rest. Lie down as soon as you can. Wrap ice in a towel and hold it on the sore area for 20 to 30 minutes to reduce pain and swelling. The best position for relief of pain is to lie on your back on the floor with pillows under your knees, with your hips and knees bent and your feet on a chair. Stay in this position for five to 20 minutes at a time.

Moist heat (heating pad) therapy is generally more comfortable after the first 24 hours and helps bring more blood to injured area.

Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen may help. Take these medications with food and as directed on the label. If you have any questions or concerns, check with your health care professional.

A brace or corset protects the spine by adding the needed support and by restricting movement.

Manipulation refers to someone working with his or her hands on your back. It involves twisting, stretching and subtle movements. Usually manipulation is limited to muscle spasms and joint adhesions. Your back should be medically diagnosed before you consider manipulation.

Traction uses weighted pulleys to stretch or straighten joints. It eases pressure on the spine and keeps the joints immobilized to allow healing to occur, relieve symptoms and assure complete bed rest.

Surgery is not a substitute for other forms of treatment, nor is it any guarantee that back problems are over.

PREVENTION

- Do not lift by bending at the waist
 - Lift the object by bending your hips and knees and squatting to pick up the object
 - Keep your back straight and hold the object close to your body
 - Avoid twisting your body while lifting
- Push rather than pull when you must move heavy objects
- If you must sit at your desk or at the wheel of a car or truck for long hours, break up the time with stops to stretch
- Think about your posture
- Wear flat shoes or low heels (1-inch or less).

BUILD A HEALTHY BACK

A healthy back is the result of stretching and strengthening exercises, along with a nutritious diet and general wellness. Proper posture and lifting techniques will help build a healthy back. Your goals are to improve flexibility and endurance in the muscles of the back.