



Caring for Your Back

Low-back discomfort can come from many things, such as sprains or strains, trauma or medical conditions, but there are steps you can take that can help alleviate or prevent it. Stress; an inactive lifestyle; poor posture when sitting, standing or driving; overexertion in work or play (e.g., “weekend warrior”); poor body mechanics when lifting, bending or reaching; tobacco use and poor sleeping positions may all be triggers for low-back issues.

How you can prevent low-back problems



Listen to your body, and don't push through pain.



Make stretching a regular part of your routine.



Learn proper posture and body mechanics. Ask for a jobsite work analysis, if available.



Strengthen your core muscles (in the trunk of the body) to help support the low back.



Be physically active regularly.



When building a fitness routine, start small and gradually increase time and intensity.

What To Do For Low-Back Discomfort

Acute (short-term; often gets better on its own with time)

- Hot or cold packs may help with discomfort
- Physical activity. As much as possible, keep moving to reduce stiffness and promote healing. Sitting or lying still may worsen discomfort.
- Over-the-counter pain relievers may help. Use according to package instructions, and check with your health care provider if you have questions or take other medications.

Chronic (long-term)

- Consult with your healthcare provider for the treatment plan that will best support your needs.

Red Flags

If you experience any of the following situations, please seek care from a doctor, as they may be signs of something more serious that requires treatment:

- Numbness or tingling in the legs or extremities.
- Severe pain that does not improve or worsens.
- Pain caused by a fall or injury.
- Pain only at night.
- Back pain with trouble urinating, weakness, fever or unexpected weight loss.

Stretches

Do not overuse these techniques - discontinue if you experience numbness, tingling and/or increased soreness.



Hamstring Stretch

Place one leg in front of you, keeping your heel on the ground and knee straight. If needed, stand next to something for balance. Keeping your back straight, place your hands on the thigh or hips for support, and lean forward at the hips. You should feel a mild pulling sensation. Repeat on the opposite side.



Back Bend

Place your hands on your hips. Lean backwards slowly and in a controlled manner. Pause for a few seconds, then return to the starting position.



Quadriceps Stretch

Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees straight, but not locked. Hold onto the chair for balance with your left hand. Bend your right leg back and grab your foot in your right hand. Keep your knee pointed to the floor. Gently pull your leg until you feel a mild pulling sensation in your thigh. Repeat on the opposite side. (If you can't grab your ankle, loop a resistance band, belt or towel around your foot and hold both ends.)

This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your doctor for advice about changes that may affect your health.

