

6 TIPS

for managing low back pain

1 Low back pain is one of the top 10 reasons someone visits their doctor. It can be caused by a variety of reasons, including age, occupation, pregnancy, injury, strains, skeletal irregularities, or osteoporosis.

2 Share your personal health history and family history to ensure appropriate testing. Tell your doctor about “red flags,” such as recent trauma, history of cancer, or loss of feeling/weakness/numbness in lower limbs.

3 Imaging tests, such as xray, CT or MRI, done less than four weeks from onset of low back pain rarely improves pain and outcomes. These can also add unnecessary costs without benefit.

4 **Consider trying these alternatives first:**

- Stay active! Walking and moving around help prevent your muscles from stiffening, but don't overdo it with strenuous activities.
- Apply heat or ice to ease comfort.
- Adjust your sleeping position and also your sitting position (Get up and move every 30 minutes). Putting a pillow between your legs when sleeping on your side or a pillow under your knees when sleeping on your back can reduce back discomfort.
- Use over-the-counter pain relievers.
- Consider physical therapy, massage or other pain relief supportive measures.

5 Exercise is the best way to relieve low back pain and prevent future attacks. Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

6 Opioids (Vicodin, Norco) should not initially be prescribed. Early opioid use is associated with longer disability.

If pain persists or worsens, contact your primary care physician.

This health alert is brought to you by:



Source: [ChoosingWisely.org](https://www.choosingwisely.org); American Academy of Family Physicians, Michigan Quality Improvement Consortium; 2023

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