

BACK PAIN

LOW BACK PAIN (LUMBAGO)

THE LOW BACK IS THE MOST COMMON AREA OF THE SPINE WHERE PAIN OCCURS¹

Introduction

1 in 10 individuals suffer from low back pain.² Over one third of people claim that back pain interferes with their daily life.³ At some point in our lives, 90% of people will experience low back pain.⁴

Back pain needs attention from the very first episode. In fact, failing to address a single episode of back pain can aggravate, prolong and spread the damage further, making it more and more difficult to find relief from treatment.⁵

Why does back pain occur?

The adult spine is formed of 24 small bones, called vertebrae. These vertebrae are supported by a complex network of muscle, cartilage, tendons and ligaments, bearing the weight of the entire upper body and much of its weight during activities such as walking, running, and lifting.⁶ The vertebrae and its surrounding structures also protect the spinal cord, which is responsible for sending and receiving nerve signals to and from the brain and the rest of the body. Because the back plays such a central role in daily activities and assumes so much of the body's weight, it is a common area of strain and sprain, both of which cause back pain.⁶ Moreover, when damage or injury occurs to part of the spine or its surrounding tissue is strained or damaged, bodily functions and mobility may be compromised.⁷

What are the symptoms of low back pain?

There is no single type of back pain. It could be dull or sharp. It could be limited to a small part of the back or spine or it might be spread over a larger area.

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Low back pain may be accompanied by muscle spasms. Symptoms can also be experienced in the legs, buttocks or feet, such as pain, numbness, or tingling.

Important

Back pain can be a medical condition *and* a symptom of another medical condition. The right diagnosis is important.

What causes low back pain?

It is not unusual for back pain to be caused by more than one factor or contributing factor.

- Age
- Arthritis
- A herniated disc
- Accident, falls, injury, or strain
- Compression fractures
- A sedentary lifestyle
- Lack of physical exercise
- Overweight or obesity
- Manual work, such as lifting
- Smoking
- Poor sleeping conditions or lack of sleep
- Tension, stress, or spasms
- Another medical condition
- A condition existing at birth

Low back pain treatment checklist

- Rule out and treat any other medical conditions related to the pain.
- Depending on the diagnosis, consider beginning with conservative treatment, also known as observation.
- Make any necessary lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking or losing weight.
- Work with your doctor or Cigna Decision Support to evaluate the benefits of further treatment such as physical therapy, medication, or interventions.

Questions about your diagnosis?

Unsure which treatment is right for you?

Did you know you have access to a free, independent and confidential decision support service?

Discuss your concerns and have your case reviewed by a specialist in your condition.

The decision is yours. And we're with you all the way.



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2. Hoy D, March L, Brooks P, et al. The global burden of low back pain: estimates from the Global Burden of Disease 2010 study. *Ann Rheumatic Dis.* 2014; 73: 968-974.

3. Most Americans Live with Low Back Pain - and Don't Seek Treatment. American Physical Therapy Association Web Site. <http://www.apta.org/Media/Releases/Consumer/2012/4/4/> Published April 4, 2012. Updated May 25, 2012. Accessed March 13, 2017.

4. What are back problems? Australian Government/ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Web Site <http://www.aihw.gov.au/back-problems/what-are-back-problems/>.

5. What Can Physical Therapy Do For Your Back & Neck Pain. Cleveland Clinic website. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/what-can-physical-therapy-do-for-your-back-and-neck-pain/>

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7 Spinal cord injury. Mayo Clinic website. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/spinal-cord-injury/basics/definition/con-20023837> . Accessed September 11, 2017.

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