

BACK PAIN

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING FOR LOW BACK PAIN

Introduction

Diagnostic testing for back pain aims to rule out any underlying medical conditions that might be causing the pain and ensure that the right treatment is followed, saving time and suffering.

As several different factors can contribute to back pain — often at the same time — a definitive diagnosis may not be possible, and for 85% of back pain cases, the exact cause may remain unknown.¹ That is why being able to describe and discuss symptoms with a doctor or specialist is an important step in finding relief, preventing the condition from worsening, and proceeding to further testing if necessary.

Describing your symptoms

A diagnosis for back pain begins with a visit to the doctor, who can then determine the correct course of action.

Many individuals find it helpful to prepare for this appointment in advance.

Consider these questions:

- On a scale of 0 to 10, how intense is the pain?
- How can I describe the pain? (For example, is it burning, aching, or tingling?)
- Where do I feel the pain? Does it radiate?

In this guide...

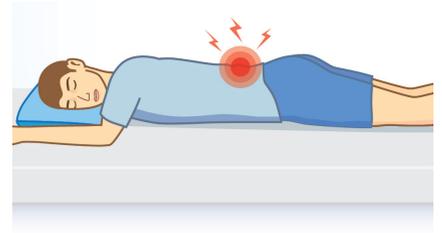
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- When did it start?
- Is the pain constant? Are there times of day when the pain is worse?
- Does the pain get worse when I sit, stand, walk, or do a specific activity?
- Can I think of any physical reason for the pain, such as a recent accident or injury?
- Do I do manual work, or sit at a computer or desk for long periods of time?
- Am I taking any medications?
- How would I rate my current level of stress? Have I been feeling tense lately?



Preparing for diagnostic testing

Diagnostic tests may have certain disadvantages or risks. It is important to understand what is involved before going ahead with any procedure:

- What exactly will happen during testing?
- How long is the entire procedure?
- Does my insurance cover the cost of this testing?
- Does this test hurt or cause discomfort?
- Do I need to take any time off work for this test?
- Is there any preparation or recovery time involved?
- Are there any health risks or possible complications associated with this testing?
- How conclusive or definitive is the test?
- Do I need to take a sedative or any medication for this testing? If yes, does someone need to accompany me afterwards?
- Do I have any other medical conditions (previous or existing) that may complicate this test or the results?
- Am I taking any medications that might be incompatible with this testing?



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.



1.The Spine and MRI Scanning. British Association of Spine Surgeons website. <http://www.spinesurgeons.ac.uk/patients/patient-information/the-spine-and-mri-scanning>.

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