



Low Back Pain—Acute or Chronic

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Low back pain can be:

- **Acute.** This is new pain that can last a few days to a few weeks—at the most a few months.
- **Chronic.** This pain can last for more than a few months. Sometimes it can last for years.

How is low back pain treated?

Most acute low back pain gets better on its own within several weeks, no matter what the cause. Time and doing usual activities are all that most people need to feel better.

Using heat or ice and taking over-the-counter pain medicine also can help while your body heals.

If you aren't getting better on your own or your pain is very bad, your doctor may recommend:

- Physical therapy.
- Spinal manipulation, such as by a chiropractor.
- Acupuncture.
- Massage.

If you have chronic low back pain, treatment will help you understand and manage your pain. Treatment may include:

- **Staying active.** This may include walking or doing back exercises.
- **Physical therapy.**
- **Medicines.** Some of these medicines are also used for other problems, like depression.
- **Pain management.** Your doctor may have you see a pain specialist.
- **Counseling.** Having chronic pain can be hard. It may help to talk to someone who can help you cope with your pain.

Surgery isn't needed for most people. But it may help some types of low back pain.

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