



Preventing Low Back Pain

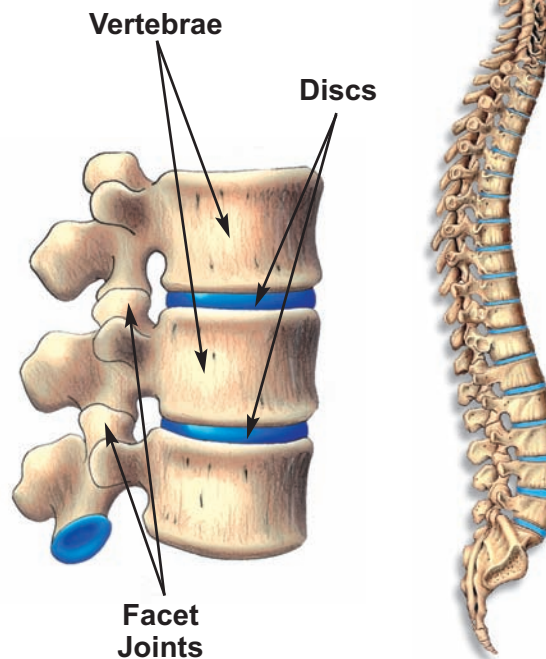
After the first time you have had low back pain, you are likely to have it again. To help keep your back healthy and avoid further pain:

- Practice good posture.
- Get regular, low-impact exercise. Walk, swim, or ride a stationary bike.
- Wear low-heeled shoes with good support.
- Sleep on your side. A medium-firm mattress may put the least stress on your back.
- Watch your weight. Being too heavy, especially around your waist, puts extra stress on your back.
- Don't try to lift things that are too heavy for you. When you must lift, bend your knees and keep your back straight, keep the object you are lifting close to your belly button, and avoid lifting and twisting at the same time. See a picture of proper lifting technique.

If you sit or stand for long periods at work:

- Pay attention to your posture. Sit or stand up straight, with your shoulders back.
 - Make sure your chair has good back support.
 - Take regular breaks to walk around.
- If your work involves a lot of bending, reaching, or lifting:
- Talk to your human resources department to see if there are other ways you can do your work.
 - Don't depend on a "back belt" to protect your back. Studies have not shown these belts to be effective in reducing back injuries. The most they can do is to help remind you to use good techniques for lifting.

Spine Anatomy



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Low Back Pain

Surgical Treatment





What Is Chronic Low Back Pain?



Chronic low back pain typically starts with mild episodes that are self-limited and are mostly due to ligamentous and/or muscle

stretch. In time, these episodes become more frequent and take longer to resolve. Sometimes, the episodes are marked by severe pain, the so-called “back attack”.

What Causes Chronic Low Back Pain?

The two most common causes for chronic low back pain are the intervertebral disc and the facet joints. With age, the disc material loses some of its’ water content and thus decreases in height and elasticity. This leads to abnormal “bone on bone” motion, as well as abnormal loading of the facets, resulting in low back pain.

What Is The Treatment For Low Back Pain?



About nine out of ten patients will benefit from a conservative treatment plan, consisting of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications,

physical therapy, manipulation, epidural steroid injections, and others. If conservative measures fail to improve low back pain to a tolerable level, surgical treatment may become an option.

Physical therapy: assists in relieving symptoms and teaches patients how to prevent future recurrences.

Medications: can help to reduce pain and inflammation.

Epidural steroid injections: (ESI) deliver anti-inflammatory medication directly to the inflamed area and provide temporary relief.

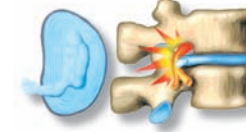


Exercises: can be helpful in alleviating painful symptoms and preventing pain from recurring in the future. A physical therapist or your doctor can recommend the most beneficial exercises for your symptoms.

What Is The Surgical Treatment For Chronic Low Back Pain?

In selected patients, low back pain may be decreased by stopping the abnormal motion at the diseased level (or levels), by performing a spinal fusion. Due to recent technological advances, this operation can now be done through very small skin incisions (“minimally invasive”) with reduced recovery time and postoperative pain.

Bulging Disc



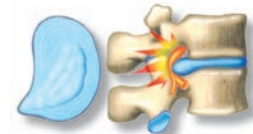
Arthritis



Instability



Ruptured or Herniated Disc



Who Should Undergo A Spinal Fusion?

Spinal surgery should be used as a last resort for the treatment of low back pain. Patients should have incapacitating low back pain for at least two years, resistant to medication and physical therapy (at least three months), and possibly epidural steroid injections. Since smoking reduces the rate of a successful fusion in half, patients should quit smoking for at least one year after the operation. Lumbar MRI should show degeneration preferably at only one or two levels. Other studies may be necessary to define the primary pain generator (the exact cause of pain).

What Are The Expectations After The Surgery?

The bone grows through the surgical implants in six months to one year, but the axial low back pain should significantly improve several weeks after surgery. Any type of spinal fusion will put more pressure on the levels above and below the fusion, so long term follow up for possible juxtafusal disease is recommended.