



## **Back Pain**

Back pain affects almost everyone at some time, usually in the low back and frequently for only a few days to several weeks. If your pain does not go away, you should see your doctor for an appropriate referral.

The main cause of acute (short duration) back pain is musculo-skeletal strain. Core abdominal muscles strength is important in supporting the back. Women with weak abdominal muscles can have a tendency to strain their backs with lifting or exercise.. Prolonged standing or sitting also increase the risk of having back pain.

Chronic back pain has many etiologies. An abnormality of the bones such as spurs or scoliosis can cause pain. A “protruding” or “ruptured” disc can put pressure on the nerves in the back and cause pain. This is frequently associated with pain radiating down a leg or buttocks (sciatica). Weakness and numbness in the legs or feet can also occur.

For most people, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as Naprosyn or ibuprofen work well to decrease inflammation and pain. These medications are available without a prescription. Some women respond to rest while others improve with stretching and continued movement. Ice packs initially or heating pads after the first 24 hours may also help. Hot tubs, warm showers or massage may also decrease pain. Physical therapy can also be helpful. Using a pillow or rolled up towel for lumbar support while sitting is advised. Avoid high heels and make sure body dynamics are appropriate while working at a desk or computer..

After a back strain, measures to prevent a recurrence should include exercises to strengthen the back and abdominal muscles. Maintaining a normal body weight is recommended. Avoid lifting while twisting or bending forward.

In cases where the pain becomes chronic, an evaluation by an orthopedic back specialist may be warranted.