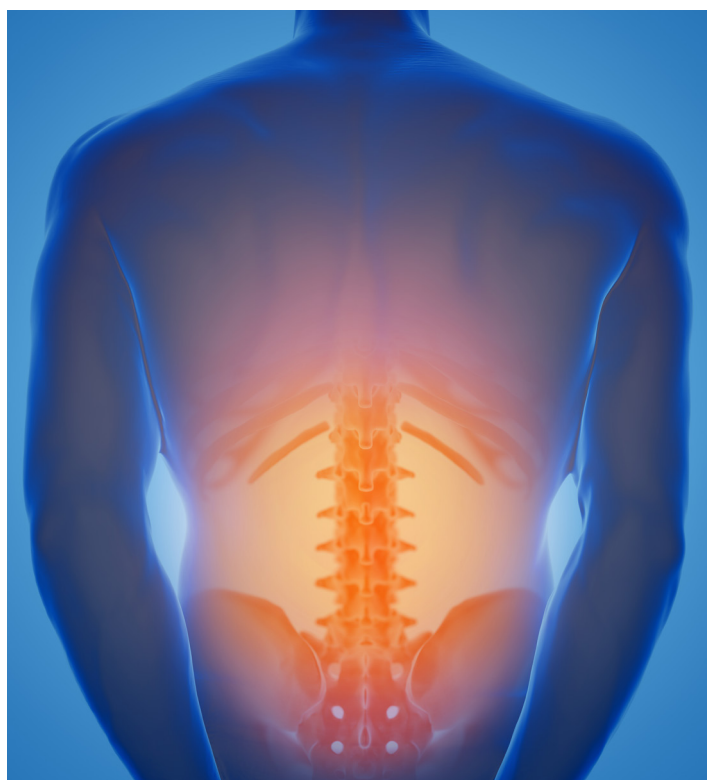


Acute low back pain



Low back pain is very common with around 80-90% of adults experiencing back pain in their lifetime. Most episodes of low back pain are short term and get better quickly, often within a month. Pain, soreness, and/or stiffness are common symptoms

Know the facts

- Your back is made up of many structures – muscles, ligaments, discs, bone, and nerves. Injury or irritation to any of these structures may cause pain
- In the short-term, this pain is telling you to slow down, but does not necessarily mean you are causing damage
- You will be assessed by your doctor and/or physiotherapist to check for any nerve damage and rule out serious causes of back pain.

- X-rays and other scans are not usually required in the first 4-6 weeks. You will be advised if this is necessary
- Serious back injuries or diseases that require specialist treatment happen from time to time, but they are uncommon. Provided there is no serious cause of your back pain, the exact cause of the pain is not required to effectively treat your back pain.

In the Emergency Department we are aiming to:

- Exclude serious causes of back pain
- Make you more comfortable at rest with pain relief
- Make movement more manageable
- Provide advice on self-management
- Refer you to your GP or physiotherapist for ongoing management.

Tips to help recovery

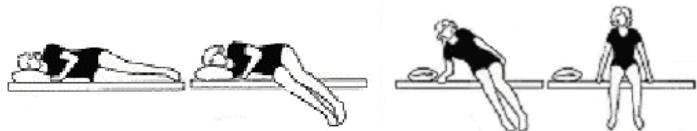
- ‘Relative rest’- remain active and keep moving:
 - Try regular, gentle movements including exercises
 - Modify your activity to keep moving – do less of an activity or do easier activities
 - Gradually increase your activity as your pain improves
- Reduce aggravating activities
 - Stay away from prolonged positions (e.g. standing for a long time) and heavy lifting, bending/twisting in the first few days
 - Try to keep a good posture in sitting and standing
- Prolonged bed rest makes your muscles weaker and joints stiff
 - E.g. you may find the pain is worse in the morning.

- Interpret your pain – it is often normal to have some pain moving or walking.
 - Pain that is manageable with movement and eases quickly with rest is okay.
 - If your pain does not ease with rest and remains aggravated for a prolonged period after an activity then seek further advice from your GP or physiotherapist.
- Take pain relief given by your doctor – this will help you move!
 - Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if the pain relief is not sufficient

Getting out of bed

The following can be the most comfortable way for you to move when getting in and out of bed.

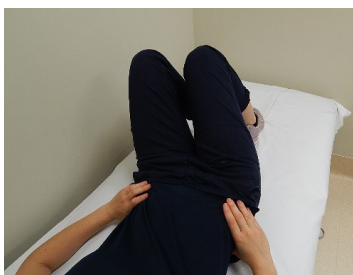
- Bend both knees, roll on to your side keeping hips and shoulders in line.
- Slide your feet over the edge of mattress, at the same time as pushing up onto your elbow and other hand to help you sit upright.



Here are some simple exercises that you may find helpful in the early days:

Exercise 1: Knee rolling

Lie on your back with your knees bent and together. Slowly roll your knees from side to side keeping your upper trunk still. Move your knees from side to side, only doing a small range of movement.



Repeat ____ times.

Exercise 2: Pelvic tilts

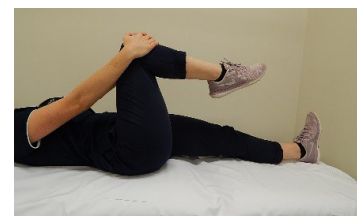
Lie on your back with your knees bent and arms by your side. Flatten your spine towards the bed and then gently arch it.



Repeat ____ times.

Exercise 3: Knee to chest

Lie on your back with your knees bent and arms by your side. Gently bring one knee up towards your stomach and hold for ____ seconds. You can use your arms to assist if required.



Repeat ____ times on either side.

Please note – these exercises should not increase your pain. If it does you must stop immediately.

Recovery and follow-up treatment

- Your symptoms should ease over a few weeks. Most people are back to normal activities within six weeks
- Follow-up with your local GP or physiotherapist if your back pain is slow to improve and you are having trouble returning to your usual activities.

When to consult your doctor:

- If you are in severe pain which gets worse over several weeks instead of better, or if you are unwell with back pain you should see your doctor.
- **You should attend a hospital Emergency Department if you develop:**
 - **Back pain associated with fever**
 - **Feelings of pins and needles or numbness in your legs**
 - **Significant weakness in your legs**
 - **Lose control of your bowel or bladder or difficulty urinating**
 - **Feel numb around your buttocks or genital region**
- These symptoms could mean you have a serious medical condition and need urgent treatment.

Seeking help:

- For other general medical problems see your local doctor or healthcare professional.
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) provides health information, referral and teletriage services to the public in all parts of Queensland. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call.
- In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).



Partnering with Consumers - This patient information brochure supports National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard 2. Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this patient information.



© The State of Queensland (Townsville Hospital and Health Service) 2022, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au

