

What is Back Pain?

Back pain can have many causes. These causes include accidents, injuries, tight muscles, being overweight, and getting older. Cancer, infection, or diseases in other organs can occasionally cause it as well. Stress can make the pain worse and last longer.



WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Back pain symptoms include:

- ❑ Aches and pains along the spine, from base of the neck to the tail bone
- ❑ Sharp, localized pain in the neck, upper back, or lower back
- ❑ Chronic ache in the middle or lower back, especially after sitting or standing for a long time
- ❑ Pain that goes from buttocks down the leg



HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

It is different for each person. Sometimes it can last only a few days or weeks. This is acute pain. Sometimes it can last much longer. You might feel it all or some of the time. Chronic pain can last 3 months or longer.

HOW CAN I FEEL BETTER?

Sometimes there is no quick fix for long-term back pain—but with time and changes in your lifestyle you can often see a big improvement. You should work with your health care practitioner to develop a treatment plan. The combination of standard care and integrative medicine care shows good results. Medications like NSAIDs can be helpful, but you should be careful about using these for the long term as there can be many side effects. Using opioid or narcotic medications for back pain can be especially dangerous. Here are some options to consider.

BODY THERAPIES

Acupuncture: This Chinese Medicine treatment involves inserting tiny, sharp needles into the skin. It can reduce pain and improve function. It works especially well when combined with other therapies such as spinal manipulation and exercise therapy. You might consider community acupuncture. This is a low-cost treatment option. Treatment is provided in groups.

Spinal Manipulation: Both chiropractors and osteopathic physicians use techniques that help relieve back pain. A chiropractor strongly focuses on the treatment of the spine. An osteopathic physician also has special training on the spine but usually has a broader focus. They both use their hands to improve the motion in your joints.

Physical Therapy: Physical therapists help you to regain movement, strength, and flexibility. They can use both hands-on techniques and exercises to help you.

Massage Therapy: A massage therapist will manipulate soft tissues of your body. It has been shown to have similar results to exercise in the treatment of chronic lower back pain. There are many types of massage. One type that works well for back pain is acupressure.

MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Pain can affect your mood. Your mood can affect your pain. It is important to consider mind-body connections when you have chronic back pain.

Yoga: This mind-body exercise can help improve back pain and prevent it from coming back. It can also improve your mood. There are many types of yoga. Find a teacher who is experienced in yoga therapy for back pain.

Mindfulness Meditation: This is a meditation technique that teaches you to focus on the present moment. It has been shown to reduce pain, and is a great long-term treatment you can do at home and with a teacher.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: This talk therapy focuses on how you think. A therapist will work with you to help you feel and act better in all situations. It has been shown to be effective in reducing chronic pain.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

It is important to keep a healthy lifestyle in general. Below are some things that can help you feel better and prevent back pain in the future.

- ❑ Exercise and eat healthy: Maintain normal physical activity as much as possible. And keep your weight down. A healthy body puts less stress on your back.
- ❑ Lift properly: Bend your knees and keep your back straight.
- ❑ Take breaks: Take regular 5-minute breaks when sitting for a long time.
- ❑ Strengthen and stretch: Maintain strong belly and back muscles. Incorporate a regular walking and stretching routine.
- ❑ Check your mattress: Notice how you feel after you wake up. You might need to change your mattress.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit nciph.org/backpain



