

What **You** Should **Know** About Your **Chronic Low Back Pain**

Facts about chronic low back pain

- 'Chronic' means the pain has lasted for more than three months (if the pain has only been around for a few weeks, it is 'acute' low back pain)
- The longer you've had the pain, the less likely it can be cured or will go away completely
- Chronic low back pain can cause emotional distress and depression, making it harder to deal with the pain
- People with chronic low back pain can improve their daily lives and overall quality of life
- The most effective way to deal with your pain is to see a health professional and to help yourself

How do I know that my doctor hasn't missed something that can be cured?

- While it's possible that a curable cause of your chronic low back pain has been overlooked, that is less and less likely the longer your pain stays around

Who can help me?

- Family doctors
- Chiropractors
- Physical therapists
- Osteopathic physicians
- Nurse practitioners

Do I need x-rays, an MRI, or laboratory tests?

- Most people with chronic low back pain don't need these tests
- Your treating clinician will order tests only if the results could help you

What should I do?

- Keep moving! Staying active and exercising helps
- Learn and use pain coping skills, relaxation, and stress management to decrease your pain
- Pace yourself, and keep within your physical limits
- Consider getting acupuncture, getting a massage, doing aqua therapy, participating in a yoga class, and joining a support group - pain relief may come from a variety of places!
- If needed, take acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®, Motrin®) for the pain

What should I not do?

- Don't stay in bed

What will help me recover?

- No single treatment helps everyone, and no single treatment will take care of your pain. A combination of approaches will likely have the greatest benefit
- Stay active, and ask your treating clinician about which rehabilitation and pain programs that are available in your community could help you the most
- For more information, see the brochure "Chronic Low Back Pain - So Your Back Hurts..." available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lowbackpaininfo>

Should I take pain medications?

- Over-the-counter medications (e.g., acetaminophen or ibuprofen) can be effective. Take as directed on the label and ask your pharmacist, doctor, or prescribing practitioner if you have any questions about how much to take
- Muscle relaxants used for a short period of time may help with muscle spasm
- Your doctor may prescribe other medications if your pain interferes with your activity or is severe



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For video on how to deal with chronic low back pain, visit
<http://tinyurl.com/lowbackpaininfo>



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