

Low Back Pain and You

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If this sounds familiar, you are not alone. Spine pain, specifically, low back pain affects up to 90% of Americans during their lifetime with an annual cost to the healthcare system of over \$250 billion. It is the most common work related injury and second most common reason for a patient to visit their primary care physician. The good news is that a majority of acute low back pain improves over a period of a few days or weeks. The bad news is that when it hits, it hurts and can be severely limiting to all aspects of your life.

When low back pain occurs, it's recommended that patients avoid bed rest and remain active as much as possible, use ice for 15 minutes several times daily and use anti-inflammatory medication per direction of your primary care physician. As the pain decreases, a gradual return to normal daily activity is recommended. X-rays or MRI's are generally not necessary. However, If you experience low back pain including pain below your knee, loss of bowel or bladder control, was precipitated by a traumatic incident (fall or motor vehicle accident) or accompanied by fever, nausea, vomiting, weakness or sweating, seek immediate medical attention.

At Jordan Spine Care, the most common presentation of low back pain is that aggravated by forward bending. Whether it is yard work, house work, playing with children or grandchildren or just getting up from sitting position, the action of forward bending is the most common complaint of low back pain sufferers. A simple and productive activity to avoid such aggravation is called "standing back extension". This activity was developed by a New Zealand therapist named Robin McKenzie. The exercise is done standing and of most benefit to people whose back pain is worse after sitting or bending forward.

To perform the exercise, stand, place your hands on your hips and lean back with your knees straight. You should experience a slight pressure in your low back followed by a subtle stretching sensation. The exercise can be held for a short time (10 seconds or one deep breath) or done repetitively for 5 to 15 repetitions. The exercise can be safely performed several times daily, but a good reminder is to perform it each time you stand up at work or in the yard.

Another trick is the use of ice. While it can be uncomfortable, ice is a productive analgesic or pain reliever for low back pain. We recommend that people use ice gel packs, or a bag of frozen peas, placing it across the low back for a period of 15 minutes while at rest. A second way of icing one's back, and less conventional, is to secure the ice pack inside the belt line and actually wear it during activity. This not only helps to avoid pain during

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and learn to take control of your low back pain.

activity but also helps to decrease local inflammation that leads to post activity low back stiffness and soreness, a common complaint among patients.

Over time, it is important to develop a simple and effective self-care strategy that works for YOUR back pain. An excellent place to start is to maintain a healthy diet, control weight gain, learn to engage in appropriate exercise programs, engage in a healthy social life and do not smoke.