

A person wearing a red hoodie and a green backpack is shown from the side. They are holding their lower back with their right hand, suggesting discomfort or pain. A white water bottle is visible in the backpack. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

We've got your back.

What you need to know
about low back pain.

HIGHMARK 

Because Life.™



What are the most common causes of low back pain?

Poor posture

Whether sitting, walking, standing, or lifting, good posture reduces the overall stress to your lower back.

Stress

Emotional stress often leads to muscle tension, which can result in low back pain.

Back strains and sprains

These injuries are usually the result of small tears in the muscles and ligaments of your lower back.

Osteoarthritis

This condition generally occurs in people over the age of 50, and can lead to disc deterioration, decreased disc space, and bone spurs.

Herniated disc

This occurs when a disc between two vertebrae starts slipping out of place, which can irritate the surrounding nerves and cause considerable pain.



What are the best ways to manage low back pain early on?

Get plenty of rest

No, this doesn't mean you should lie in bed all day. It's best to use a combination of rest and activity as designated by your doctor.

Apply a heat or ice pack

These can be used interchangeably based on what's comfortable for you.

Sit up straight

We know, we know. You've heard this before. But it really works — we promise.

Move your body

Remember, everything in moderation. Gentle and simple exercises and stretches are best.

Consider using over-the-counter pain relievers

Before you go this route, make sure to talk to your primary care physician.

Who do I see if I think I need medical attention?

Your primary care physician (PCP)

Your PCP is often able to manage your recovery alone, but for more serious injuries they may want to consult other health care providers, like a specialist or physical therapist.

A physical therapist

A physical therapist may be able to assist in your recovery if prescribed by your PCP.

Plus, if you sign up for our Virtual Physical Care Program, powered by Sword, you can get convenient, virtual access to a physical therapist, anytime, anywhere.

A specialist

A specialty physician may be consulted by your PCP when an additional evaluation and tests are needed to determine the best plan for care.

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, you should seek emergency care ASAP:

- Pain shooting down the leg
- Excessive drug or alcohol use
- Fever
- A history of cancer, osteoporosis, or steroid use
- Digestive or urinary issues

Remember, the most important member of your recovery team is you.
Some simple changes in your daily routine may be all it takes for you to say goodbye to low back pain for good.

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