

# LOW BACK PAIN

Low back pain (LBP) is the most common cause of disability in U.S. adults under the age of 45, and can lead to a substantial number of work absences.

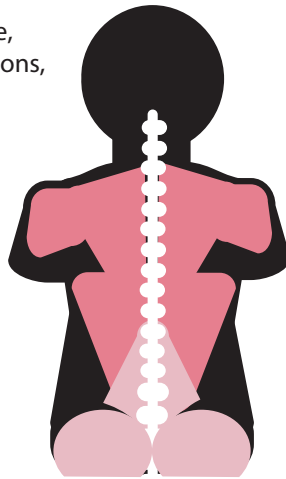


Around 80% of adults experience LBP at some point in their lifetimes.

## WHAT CAUSES LOW BACK PAIN?

LBP can be caused by an injury to different parts of the back anatomy, such as the spine, nerves, intervertebral disks, ligaments, tendons, and muscles. Depending on the injury, LBP can be felt anywhere from the mid to low back and can radiate down the legs.

Sprains, strains, or traumatic injuries that impact tendons, ligaments, or muscles are the most common causes of LBP in the workplace.



## HOW IS LOW BACK PAIN TREATED?

Most patients with LBP improve and return to regular activity within 4 to 6 weeks, with up to 90% recovering within 3 months.

If you have LBP, your doctor may recommend:

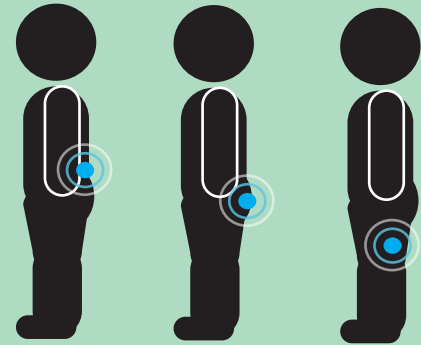
- Hot or cold packs
- Back stretches and strengthening exercises
- Physical therapy
- Medications
- Therapeutic procedures
- Surgery

## WHEN CAN I GO BACK TO WORK?

Bed rest is no longer recommended for individuals with LBP. Often, resuming normal activity is beneficial as long as there are no "red flags" present.

Speak to your doctor about your occupation and job tasks before resuming normal activity. Depending on your injury, your doctor may recommend adjustments to your work tasks to prevent further injury. This could be a certified ergonomist or an occupational therapist.

How physical is your job?



Different types of work impacts how you can develop LBP and how you would go about resolving it.

Types of work that can cause LBP:

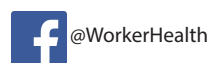
- **Sedentary Jobs**  
Majority of the day spent at the desk, computer, or at meetings.  
e.g. Administrator, Lab technician, CEO
- **Manual Work**  
Significant portion of job involves lifting, pushing, or pulling. Often repetitive tasks in uncontrolled situations or awkward postures.  
e.g. Mail delivery person, Electrician, health care workers
- **Heavy Manual Work**  
More than two-thirds of the day spent repetitively lifting, pushing, or pulling heavy objects.  
E.g. Construction workers, Movers, Laborers



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# PREVENTING LOW BACK PAIN

1. When you need to **move a heavy object**, get help, and assume things are heavier than they look. Test the weight of a object before you move it by pushing it a few inches on the floor.
2. A **regular exercise program**, of low-impact aerobics, stretching, and strengthening can reduce risk of injury. Talk to your doctor before starting any physical activity.
3. If you are overweight, lose weight through a **healthy diet** and exercise. Added belly weight creates additional stress on the low back.
4. Make sure your work space is **ergonomically sound**. Desks should be at a comfortable height and chairs should provide lumbar support. Visit [www.mountsinai.org/ergonomics](http://www.mountsinai.org/ergonomics) for more information and a workstation set up guide.
5. **Relax**. Stress and other mental health conditions can impact how pain is felt in the body, increase muscle tension, and often make you rush through a task thus increasing risk.
6. **Move**. Get up from a seated position every twenty to thirty minutes.

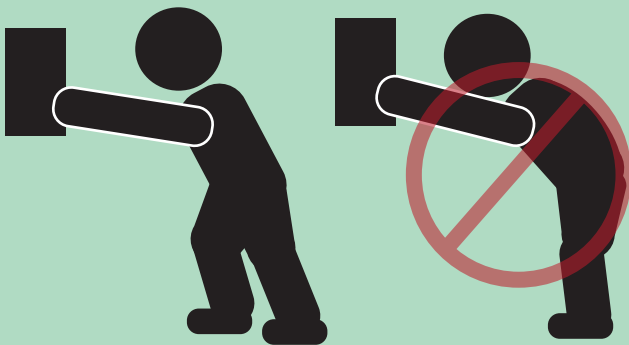
## USING PROPER BODY MECHANICS TO PREVENT LOW BACK PAIN



- Build a “bridge” to decrease stress on your back. When reaching for something, lean on a surface with one arm and then reach with the other.



- Rather than bend forward at your back, bend at your knees. Suck in your stomach muscles before you lift to engage your core. Get as close as you can to an object before lifting.



- Create a strong base of support. Widen your leg stance or stand in a lunge position.

This information is intended for general reference only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice.



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