

# We've Got Your Back

What you need to know about  
low back pain



**8** out of **10**

**Americans will experience low back pain at some point in their lives.**

---

The good news is that it's manageable. Understanding your symptoms and risk factors is a great way to keep your low back strong – and to make sure it stays that way.

# 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.



# The do's and don'ts of heavy lifting

## When you lift:

### Do:

**Plant your feet firmly** — get a stable base.

**Bend at your knees** — not your waist.

**Get a good grip** — use both hands.

**Keep the object close** to your body.

**Keep your back upright** in its natural posture.

**Lift steadily and smoothly** without jerking.

**Breathe.** If you have to hold your breath to lift the object, it's too heavy. Get help

### Don't:

Lift from the floor.

Twist and lift.

Lift with one hand.

Lift loads across obstacles.

Lift while reaching or stretching.

Lift from an uncomfortable posture.

Hold your breath while lifting.



# 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 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.

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



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

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

**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.





For more helpful tips on  
how to treat low back pain, visit  
[wehaveyourbackbcbsde.com](https://wehaveyourbackbcbsde.com)  
or scan the QR code.



Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

This information is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health providers regarding your medical condition(s). Coverage for medical services described herein is subject to the terms of your health plan benefit agreement and network coverage varies by plan. Check your member materials for details.

28329 11/20 MX340682