



Fact Sheet

Back Pain

What is it?

Back pain is a common complaint and most people will experience low back pain at least once during their lives. It is also one of the most common reasons people go to the doctor or miss work.

Symptoms of Back Pain

Symptoms of back pain may include muscle aches, shooting or stabbing pain, radiating pain down the leg, limited flexibility or range of motion, and the inability to stand straight. Back pain that lasts from a few days to a few weeks is considered acute. Pain that lasts for three months or longer is considered chronic.

Causes of Back Pain

Back pain can arise from problems with the muscles, ligaments, tendons, and disks in your spine. The most common causes of injury to the back resulting in pain are strained muscles and ligaments, improper or heavy lifting, or a sudden awkward movement. On occasion a person can experience back pain as a result of a muscle spasm. In some cases, back pain may be caused by structural problems such as a bulging or ruptured disk, sciatica, arthritis, skeletal irregularities, or osteoporosis.

Risk Factors:

- **Smoking**
- **Obesity**
- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Physically strenuous work**
- **Sedentary work**
- **Stressful job**
- **Anxiety**

Prevention:

- **Exercise**
- **Build strength and flexibility**
- **Quit smoking**
- **Maintain a healthy weight**
- **Use proper body mechanics**
- **Lift smart— avoid lifting and twisting simultaneously**

Treatment:

- **Medications**
- **Physical therapy and exercise**
- **Chiropractic care**
- **Massage**
- **Cortisone injection**