



Understanding Low Back Pain

According to Choosing Wisely,[®] low back pain is defined as pain or aching in the lower back, which can vary in intensity.

Low back pain is not always related to an underlying condition. It may be caused by:

- Lifting heavy objects.
- Sudden jerks in a motor vehicle.
- Excessive strain on the muscle due to prolonged sitting or wrong positioning while sleeping.
- Prolonged use of high-heel shoes.

Low back pain is also common during pregnancy and before or during menstruation.

Treatment Consideration

Unless red flags are present, **do not obtain imaging for low back pain within the first six weeks of injury.**

- Red flags include, but are not limited to, severe or progressive loss of bowel or bladder function or when serious underlying conditions are suspected.

Low back pain is the fifth most common reason for all physician visits.

Imaging the lower spine before six weeks does not improve outcomes but does increase costs and radiation exposure.

- Conservative treatment, such as with anti-inflammatory medications, may be the best course of treatment, based upon advice from a medical professional.

Talk to your doctor to see if imaging is necessary for you.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.aafp.org/family-physician/patient-care/clinical-recommendations/all-clinical-recommendations/cw-back-pain.html>

Sources: Agency for Health Care Research and Policy (AHCPR), Cochrane Reviews

