

# Back Pain? Know Your Treatment Options



Do you have back pain? If so, you may be considering surgery with the intent of relieving pain quickly and permanently. However, there are alternatives that may prove effective in addressing your condition.

## Getting a diagnosis

The first step in getting relief is speaking with a doctor, who can determine whether the pain is caused by a musculoskeletal condition, associated with nerve damage or potentially related to another serious condition.

If your pain is acute, it should get better on its own. Chronic pain is ongoing.

## Treatment options<sup>1</sup>

If you have chronic pain, there are a variety of treatments available:

**Self care** may be advised, including getting exercise and using cold packs, a heating pad and/or a special mattress.

If you are in significant pain, your doctor may recommend you supplement self care with **medicine**, such as acetaminophen or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Talk to your doctor about using these drugs before considering the use of narcotic pain relievers.

**Physical therapy (PT)** has been shown to have good clinical outcomes. People who suffer from most types of back pain are often referred for PT before considering more aggressive treatments, including back surgery.

Other treatments your doctor may recommend include:

- Exercise therapy
- Massage therapy
- Rehabilitation
- Treatment for depression or behavioral components to the pain
- Yoga or progressive relaxation

## If those treatments fail

Medical experts in pain management recommend that patients who have chronic pain should actively participate in conservative therapy, such as exercise and PT, for at least six weeks to achieve the best results to reduce or eliminate pain.

However, if you still have significant pain, your doctor may recommend more intensive treatment, such as spinal injections or spinal fusion surgery.

<sup>1</sup> Not all treatments discussed may be covered under your health plan. Please check with your benefits administrator.

Sources: 2nd.MD, Annals of Internal Medicine, Einstein Medical, Spine-Health™/Veritas Health, North American Spine Society, WebMD®

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