



Choosing Wisely Manitoba

# Seeing Lower Back Pain Clearly

## Do you really need an MRI (or X-ray or CT scan) to speed up your recovery from lower back pain?

Muscle strains are the most common cause of lower back pain. Although the pain can be excruciating, the cause likely isn't serious. Though you may want to try everything possible to relieve the pain, research shows that diagnostic imaging procedures do not help you get better faster. Most people with lower back pain feel better in about a month whether they have an imaging test or not.

On the other hand, having tests and procedures you don't need can lead to more unnecessary tests and in some cases even unnecessary surgery.

Openly and honestly discussing your symptoms, medical history and worries with your doctor is the best way to determine the right course of treatment for you.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO



**Apply Heat or Cold**  
use what feels best for you



**Stay Active**



**Sleep Comfortably**  
on your side with the support of a pillow between your legs



If pain continues and you have any of the following conditions, symptoms or medical history, call your doctor right away so he or she can reassess your care.

### SERIOUS CONDITIONS, SYMPTOMS AND MEDICAL HISTORY

- Signs of severe or worsening nerve damage, including numbness, tingling, pricking sensations or muscle weakness
- A serious existing condition such as cancer or a spinal infection
- History of cancer
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fever
- Recent infection
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Abnormal reflexes or loss of muscle power or feeling in the legs

*This information is based on recommendations from the Canadian Association of Radiologists, the Canadian Spine Society, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Canadian Medical Association. It is not a substitute for medical advice.*



Choosing Wisely Manitoba is an initiative to improve health outcomes, patient and provider experiences and health system efficiencies and sustainability through the appropriate use of medical treatments and diagnostic testing.

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