

# Caring for your Spine

## When to see your Doctor

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Most back pain especially when caused by heavy or overreaching, usually goes away on its own after several days. In over 90 percent of acute lower back pain cases, the cause of the pain is not serious. There are many reasons why you should see a doctor if you have neck or back pain. For example, if low back pain does not go away after three to five days you should see your doctor. Additional reasons to see a doctor include but are not limited to the following.

See the doctor if you have:

- Persistent pain for more than 3 to 5 days
- Pain is intense, especially at night.
- Back or neck pain following an accident.
- Weakness, numbness, pain or tingling in legs or arms.
- Incontinence.
- History of cancer.
- High fever.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Difficulty walking

Back pain in children is not like back pain in adults. Unlike an adult a backache or back pain in a child is much more likely to represent a serious underlying disorder. This is especially true if the child is less than 4 years old. Your child should be seen by a doctor if he or she develops any of the following signs or symptoms.

- Fever or weight loss
- Weakness, numbness, trouble walking or pain that radiates down one or both legs

- Bowel or bladder dysfunction
- Pain that interferes with sleep
- Back or neck pain that persists for more than 2-3 days
- Back or neck pain associated with recent illness
- Progressive back pain

It is quite common for teenagers to develop brief episodes of "mechanical low back pain." This is often related to tight hamstrings and weak abdominal muscles. This usually resolves on its own although some require a course of chiropractic care and physical therapy. The therapeutic approach usually includes hamstring stretching and abdominal strengthening.

You do not have to wait until there is a back or neck problem before going to the doctor. There are three primary ways that your doctor can help you stay healthy. They are 1) prevention, 2) screening, and 3) treatment. Unfortunately, most people see their doctors only to get treated when they have back or related complaints.