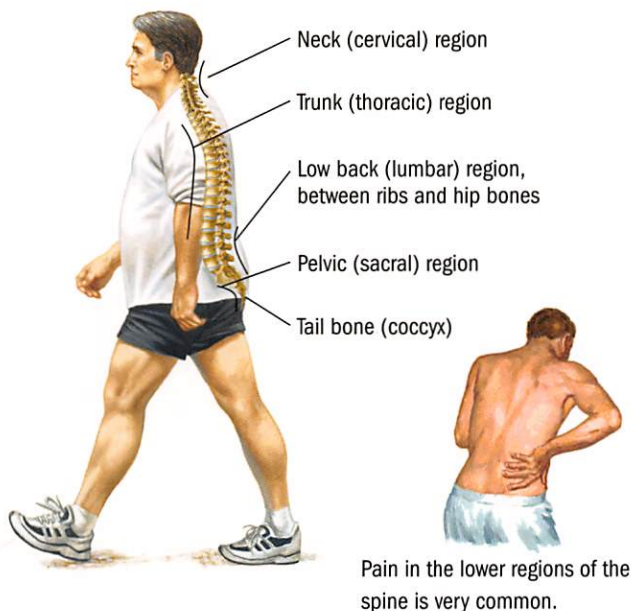
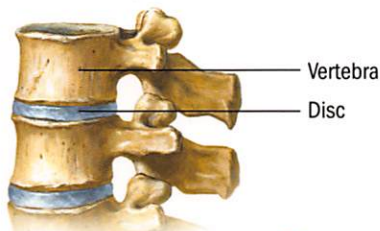


MANAGING YOUR LOW BACK PAIN

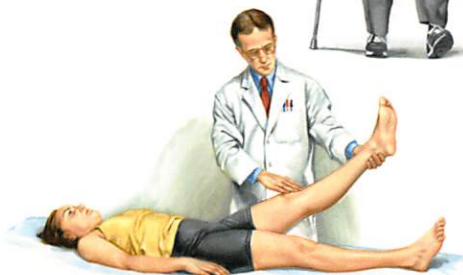


The back is made up of vertebrae, disks, nerves, muscles, and ligaments.



Injuries can be the cause of acute back pain.

Chronic back pain can be a result of obesity, poor posture, or other situations.



Physical exam, imaging, and EMG can help in the understanding of an individual's back pain.

What Causes Low Back Pain?

The back is made up of bones (vertebrae) of the spinal column, disks between these bones, the spinal cord (which contains nerves), and muscles and ligaments. Muscles in the back and belly (abdomen) help support the spine. Injury in this area can cause pain. The term low back pain means pain in the lower parts of the spine.

An injury or accident such as a fall can cause *acute* low back pain lasting 1 to 7 days. *Chronic* low back pain lasts longer, for more than 3 months. Many such injuries result from twisting or sudden movement. Obesity, poor posture, and weak back and abdominal muscles may also cause this pain. Some people have pain after sitting for a long time or reaching for something too far away.

Low back pain may also occur with diseases such as arthritis or fibromyalgia and rarely, in more serious conditions such as tumors, kidney disease and blood disorders.

What Are Other Symptoms of Low Back Pain?

Bending at the waist, lifting, walking, and standing may be hard to do. Pain may disturb nighttime sleep. Chronic pain may affect the ability to do a job. If the sciatic nerve is in the injured area, the pain, called *sciatica*, will travel down the leg.

How Is Low Back Pain Diagnosed?

Diagnosis results from taking a medical history, doing a physical, and x-ray studies or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) may be done if clearer pictures of bones, nerves, disks between the bones, or other areas are needed.

A study using electric current, called an electromyogram (EMG), helps diagnose muscle and nerve problems and may be done if pressure on the nerves may be causing numbness or tingling in the legs.

The doctor may also order blood tests to see whether the pain is caused by another ailment that may have similar symptoms.