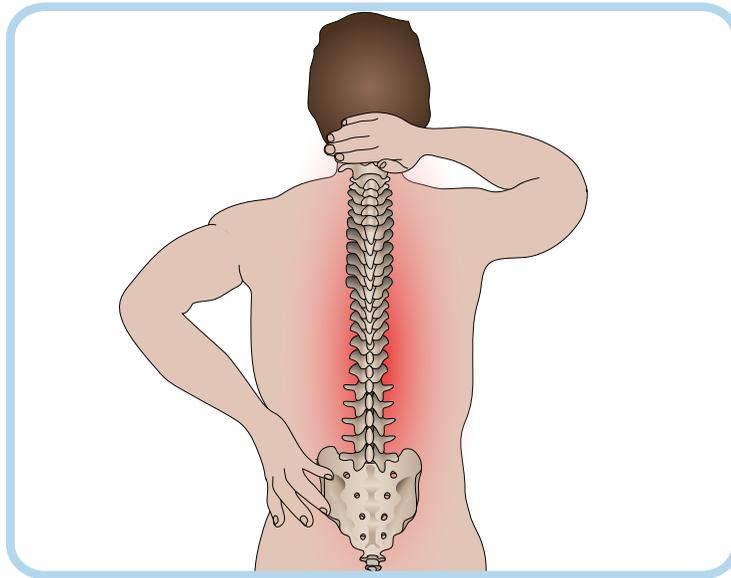


# Back pain



This material was developed by the McGill University Health Centre Emergency Department.



LA FONDATION  
DE L'HÔPITAL GÉNÉRAL DE MONTRÉAL  
THE MONTREAL GENERAL HOSPITAL  
FOUNDATION



This material is also available at:  
MUHC Patient Education Portal  
[muhcpatienteducation.ca](http://muhcpatienteducation.ca)

## What is wrong?

There are many reasons for back pain. Most of the time, it is a problem with the muscles, ligaments, tendons or discs and it gets better on its own. Usually no X-Rays or other tests are necessary.

## What should I do at home?

Avoid strenuous activities and lifting. Unless otherwise told by your doctor, you should still stay active, even if you are in pain. It will take longer for you to get better if you stay in bed.

The emergency doctor might have given you medication for pain. Take it as directed.

## When am I going to feel better?

Back pain may take a long time to go away but it usually gets better within a few weeks.

## Should I see another doctor?

You should contact your family doctor to let him or her know of your situation.

In rare cases, the emergency doctor might refer you to a specialist (an orthopedist, neurosurgeon or sports medicine doctor)

## When should I come back to the Emergency Department?

**You should return right away if:**

- ▶ You have numbness or weakness in your legs
- ▶ You can't control urine or stool, or if you are unable to urinate.
- ▶ You develop a fever above 38°C / 100.4°F
- ▶ Your pain becomes so intense that you can't move around

## Notes