

Lower back pain is a major cause of discomfort and absence from work.

This brochure provides facts about the management and treatment of back pain.

## When you injure your back

You, your care provider and your employer have certain responsibilities to make sure the treatment and management of your back injury is effective.



### Your responsibilities:

- Get treatment for your back injury if you need it.
- Tell your care provider that your injury happened at work.
- Report your back injury to your employer, even if you don't need to be off work.
- Complete the Worker's Initial Report of Injury (W1) form and send it to the WCB. This form is available from your employer, any WCB office, online at [www.wcbsask.com](http://www.wcbsask.com) or by calling WCB Teleservice at 1.800.787.9288.
- Communicate your abilities and restrictions to your employer.
- Participate fully in your treatment program and any modified work duties while you recover.



### Your care provider's responsibilities:

- Examine you and diagnose your work injury.
- Set out a treatment plan for your injury.
- Estimate how long your recovery will take.
- Provide information about your abilities and restrictions.
- Report their findings of your injury to the WCB and bill the WCB for your treatments.



### Your employer's responsibilities:

- Report your injury to the WCB.
- Accommodate your injury.
- Assist with your safe and timely return to work.

### Joint responsibilities:

- Employers and workers should keep in touch with each other on a regular basis.
- Return to work will help you reach full recovery. You, your employer, your care provider and the WCB work together to help return you to work safely.



For more information visit [www.wcbsask.com](http://www.wcbsask.com) or contact us directly:

#### Head Office

200 - 1881 Scarth Street  
Regina, SK S4P 4L1

#### Saskatoon Office

115 24th Street East  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1L5

#### Report an injury

Online: [www.wcbsask.com](http://www.wcbsask.com) or  
WCB Teleservice: 1.800.787.9288 or  
Email: [askwcb@wcbsask.com](mailto:askwcb@wcbsask.com)

#### All other phone inquiries

Phone: 306.787.4370  
Toll free: 1.800.667.7590

#### Fax and email inquiries

**Health Care Services**  
Fax: 306.787.2428  
Toll-free fax: 1.866.331.3036  
Email: [askwcb@wcbsask.com](mailto:askwcb@wcbsask.com)

#### Claims

Fax: 306.787.4311  
Toll-free fax: 1.888.844.7773  
Email: [askwcb@wcbsask.com](mailto:askwcb@wcbsask.com)

Also read *Back Talk: An Owner's Manual for Backs* on our website at [www.worksafesask.ca/resources/publications](http://www.worksafesask.ca/resources/publications).



## Managing Your Back Injury

A WCB guide for workers  
with back injuries

## Managing your back injury

If you have injured your back and need treatment, visit one of the following health care providers to diagnose and treat your injury:

- Medical doctor or nurse practitioner (NP)
- Physical therapist
- Chiropractor

Your care provider will help you manage your back injury. If you require treatment, specific exercises may help you recover. Talk to your care provider about treatment options, their risks and their benefits.

Please report your injury to your employer and the WCB, even if the injury does not require immediate care or time off work. If your injury leads to complications and you failed to report it to the WCB, your future benefits may be at risk.

## First visit to your health care provider

During your first visit, tell your care provider that your injury happened at work. You should not pay for any treatment for an injury that happened at work. Your care provider will bill the WCB for their services.

Your care provider will also provide a report to the WCB.

Your care provider is required to give you a written list of physical activities you can do at work and what you should not do as a result of your injury.

You are required to provide this list of abilities and restrictions to your employer as soon as you can. In some cases, your care provider may contact your employer to provide this information.

## Diagnosis and treatment plan

Your care provider will examine the injured area, make a diagnosis and discuss your treatment options, including the benefits and risks of each. Your treatment plan may change over the course of your recovery.

Most back injuries heal within a short time with little or no treatment required. Your care provider will decide if you need to see a specialist or have further tests (x-ray, MRI or CT-scan.) These are required in a small number of cases. Only rare cases require surgery.

## Treatment during your recovery

During the first few days after your injury, your treatment will focus on pain relief, stretching exercises and gentle movement or activity.

You should continue as many of your normal activities as possible, but avoid heavy lifting. Walking is recommended in most cases. If in doubt, check with your care provider.

As you heal, your care provider may recommend more intense stretching and other exercises to strengthen the injured area.

## Recommended treatment options

Health care providers no longer recommend bed rest or inactivity for most back injuries because it can delay recovery.

The treatment options listed here are the best ways to treat a back injury based on scientific research. Your care provider may also refer you to another provider to receive other treatment. Each treatment option has risks and benefits. Discuss your options with your care provider.

### Treatment by medical doctors or nurse practitioners

Your doctor or NP may prescribe exercises or medications to relieve pain or reduce inflammation. Your doctor or NP will tell you what the medicine is for, how often you should take it and possible side effects.

Some pain medications are addictive and should be taken only as prescribed.

### Treatment by physical therapists

Physical therapists use a variety of manual therapies and useful injury-specific exercises to treat back injuries.

Some physical therapists with specialized training also provide spinal manipulation.

### Treatment by chiropractors

Chiropractors use a variety of manual treatments, including manipulation and injury-specific exercises, in treating back injuries.

## Other treatments

You may hear of other treatments for back injuries. The WCB, however, may not pay for these treatments because of their safety risk or lack of scientific evidence about their usefulness.

Treatments that have not been proven to work include:

- Bed rest for acute back pain; and
- Lumbar supports for patients with uncomplicated lower back pain.

If you receive treatment from someone other than a doctor or NP, physical therapist or chiropractor, have them contact the WCB before starting your treatment.

The WCB will pay only for treatment that has been proven useful for back injuries by WCB accredited care providers.

## Return to work during recovery

Research shows that going back to work as soon as possible after injury actually helps you get better faster.

Your care provider will give you a list of physical tasks you can and can't do during the course of your recovery. Give this list to your employer as soon as you can. Then your employer can change your duties or adjust your work station so you can return to work safely while you recover.

In some cases, your care provider may contact your employer to make sure they understand what duties you can do safely.

Keep in touch with your employer regularly during your recovery.