

Low-Back Pain

Discharge Instructions

The instructions in this pamphlet will help you recover after an episode of low-back pain. Many people get low-back pain at some point in their lives. Most people (over 85%) have "nonspecific low back pain", which means that there is not a specific disease or injury in the spine causing the pain. Most people with back pain do not require surgery and recover within 4–6 weeks. The most important action you can take is to keep moving.

General Activity Guidelines

- **Try to stand and walk frequently during the day.** If you need to sit or lie down, make sure you change positions often. Avoid sitting or lying for more than 10 minutes at a time.
- Maintain good posture.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects or twisting your back during activities.
- Use a walker or a cane to unload your spine and prevent limping.
- Return to your usual activities, including work, as soon as you are able.

Manage Your Pain

- Take any prescription or non-prescription medication the doctor has recommended.
- Try a heating pad on your back. You can use this as often and as long as you like.
- Try an ice pack for up to 15 minutes at a time. Put a towel between the ice and your skin.

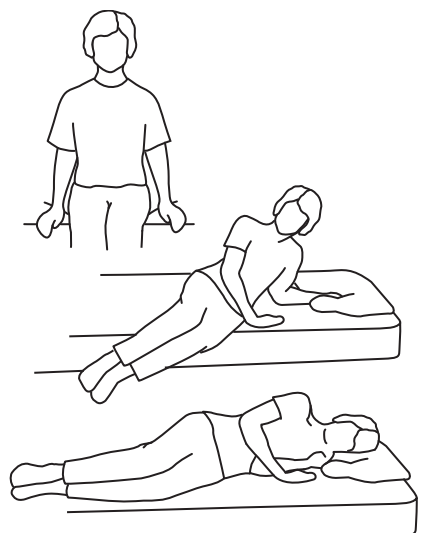
Getting Into Bed: Sit on the edge of the bed. Lie down on your side as you bring your legs onto the bed. Stay on your side if you are comfortable, or 'log roll' onto your back.

Getting Out of Bed: Gently bend your knees up and 'log roll' onto your side. Carefully lower your feet off the side of the bed and push up with your hands/ arms.

Sleep Position: Try sleeping on your side with a pillow between your legs.

See a Physiotherapist

- It is strongly recommended to see a physiotherapist as soon as you are able.
- To find a physiotherapist near you, go to:
<http://bcphysio.org/find-a-physio>.



Daily Recovery Exercises

Begin the following exercises as soon as you are able. Do them **at least 3 times a day**. Do them slowly, gently, and without holding your breath. It is normal to feel some discomfort during these exercises, but your symptoms should not get worse. If you aren't sure how to perform these exercises, review them with your health care provider.

☐ Core strengthening

a. Pelvic floor muscles:

- Tighten the muscles that stop the flow of urine. For men: imagine wading into ice water.
- Hold 6 seconds, and then slowly relax. Repeat 6 times.

b. Deep lower abdominal strengthening:

- Gently tighten your lower abdominals and hold while you take 6 quiet breaths through your nose. Breathe into the sides of your ribcage. Slowly relax. Repeat 6 times.

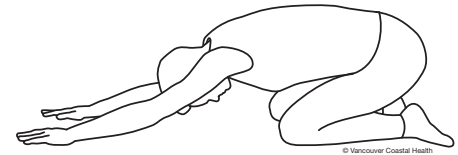
☐ Lie on back

- Lie on back with knees and head resting on pillows.
- Rest here for 10 minutes or more



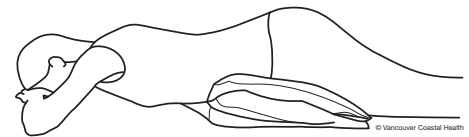
☐ Child's pose

- Kneel on hands and knees. Tuck in chin and arch back. Slowly sit back on heels, dropping shoulders.
- Rest here for 2–3 minutes or more.



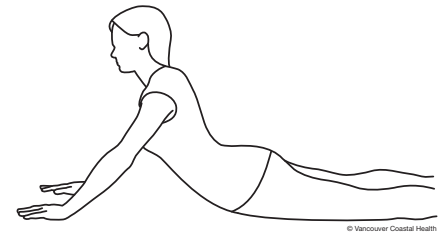
☐ Lie on stomach with pillow

- Lie on stomach. Use pillows to support hips.
- Rest here for 10 minutes or more.



☐ Relaxed push-up

- Lie on stomach with hands on either side of head. Keep lower body on floor and slowly push up with arms. Slowly lower back down. Repeat 10 times.



When to see your family doctor

- Pain that is not improving or questions about your pain medication
- Pain that is radiating down one or both legs

When to return to emergency

- Fever or chills
- Loss of control of bowel or bladder or unable to pee
- Weakness of one or both legs
- Loss of feeling in the groin area

Vancouver Coastal Health: For more copies, go online at vch.eduhealth.ca or email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **EB.200.B546**

© Vancouver Coastal Health, April 2023

Fraser Health: For more copies, go online at patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca, Catalogue # **265443**

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.

vch.ca



Making better
decisions together
with patients
and families