

When to Call a Doctor for Back Pain

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Although most back pain is caused by injuries that can heal in several days, there are times when you may need to contact a doctor. Particular injuries, such as injuries to your neck or cervical area, may require emergency treatment and the immediate attention of your doctor.

In many cases of cervical disease, non-surgical management is all you may need to overcome injury, but your doctor may need to order X-rays to see if your injury will require surgery. Your age, how long you've had the disease, previous operations on your neck, and other medical problems you might have are all factors to be considered when you visit with your doctor about back pain.

Low back pain, probably the most common form of back pain, seldom needs the treatment of a doctor. Again, self-treatment, such as rest, hot or cold packs, anti-inflammatory drugs, aspirin, or muscle relaxants may alleviate the problem in a few days. If your symptoms persist after two or three days, you may want to call a physician. Other symptoms you may have that might require immediate medical attention include numbness in your arms or legs, shooting pain that travels down your leg into your foot, the inability to stand erect, or loss of bladder or bowel control. If any of these symptoms occur, you need to see a physician as soon as possible.