



Stay in tune
with your health
and wellness

Spring 2016 | Newsletter

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Expert
Zone

BACK PAIN

EXPLORE OTHER TREATMENT:

If you're experiencing long-term pain, talk to your doctor about treatments* such as:

- Physical therapy
- Chiropractic care
- Acupuncture
- Yoga
- Massage
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Progressive muscle relaxation

* SOME OF THE
TREATMENTS MAY NOT
BE COVERED UNDER
YOUR HEALTH PLAN.

Check with your
health plan for benefit
coverage details.

Dear UAW Trust Member,

Spring is here and we're on the fast track to the warm days of summer. As the weather changes and you spend more time outdoors, we know how important your mobility is and how disabling lower-back pain can be – especially when it can last for weeks at a time.

It's not uncommon. About 80 percent of adults experience lower-back pain at some point in their lifetime. In fact, within our members (those with UAW Trust medical coverage), approximately 84,000 people – about 12 percent – are treated for back pain each year. This high number indicates that years of manual labor – heavy lifting and repetitive movements – have taken their toll and led to a high risk of back pain. As an actively engaged participant in your health care, you need the best information available to manage this potentially excruciating circumstance. Through our collaboration with *Choosing Wisely*[®] and *Consumer Reports*, we are sharing this information to ensure that you are armed and ready to manage lower-back pain when it strikes.

Typically, when faced with lower-back pain, thoughts of X-rays, CT scans or MRIs come to mind. However, in most cases, these tests do not provide much help. While these tests are important when back pain is coupled with additional symptoms, they're generally not helpful otherwise. The reality is that most people with lower-back pain feel better in about a month, whether or not they have an imaging test.

TESTING HAS RISKS.

In some cases, imaging tests can pose more of a risk, according to *Consumer Reports*. X-rays and CT scans use radiation, which can have harmful effects when exposure adds up. As a rule of thumb, it's best to avoid radiation when possible.

However, in some cases you may need an imaging test right away. Talk to your doctor if you have back pain with any of the following symptoms:

- Weight loss that you cannot explain
- Fever over 102° F
- Loss of control of your bowel or bladder
- Loss of feeling or strength in your legs
- Problems with your reflexes
- A history of cancer



Treating back pain

UNFORTUNATELY, BACK PAIN ISN'T GENERALLY SOMETHING THAT HEALS QUICKLY.

However, with a little patience and by following the steps to the right, you can help accelerate the healing process and bring the spring back into your step!

Did you know?

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH):

About **80%** of adults experience lower back pain at some point in their lifetime.

Choosing Wisely® focuses on conversations between providers and patients

Most people can get over lower-back pain in a few weeks by trying these steps:

- 1 Stay active and walk.**
- 2 Use heat.**
- 3 Take non-prescription pain relievers like Tylenol, Advil, or Aleve.**
- 4 Sleep on your side or your back, with a pillow between or under your knees.**
- 5 Ask your doctor about acupuncture, massage, yoga, or physical therapy.**

There are still times when you might need an imaging test. Talk to your doctor about your symptoms to find out if you need imaging tests – or if you can wait to see if you just get better with time.

ConsumerReports®

Choosing Wisely®

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With thanks to the American Academy of Family Physicians



This information is to use when talking with your healthcare provider. It is not a substitute for medical advice and treatment. Use this information at your own risk.

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WE WANT TO SUPPORT YOU ON YOUR PATH THROUGH A HEALTHY RETIREMENT.

Learn more at www.ConsumerHealthChoices.org/BackPain.

For more information on this topic and access to other resources, visit www.uawtrust.org.