



**Chronic Pain**  
AUSTRALIA



# FACT SHEET

## CHRONIC PAIN AUSTRALIA

“ What do I do when I hurt my back? ”

### I've hurt my back

You might feel scared when you hurt your back. It can be sudden and really frightening. There are things you can do to reduce the risk it will go on to become long term or chronic pain.

The good news is that for 90% of people this pain resolves within a few weeks. This short term or “acute” back pain is very common and it is really important to understand what to do when it happens.

Get the advice of your doctor. Always voice any concerns and questions you have particularly if you are worried that it might be something serious. Doctors will routinely perform a thorough assessment including taking a full history and asking some important questions, to see that there is nothing more serious to worry about, and once this happens there are things that can be done to help reduce the pain. Your doctor should reassure you and explain what is happening. If you are not satisfied with the advice of your doctor, you may be able to seek another opinion. Please see “Choosing your team” fact sheet.

In the first 4-6 weeks, investigations such as X-rays and CT scans are only carried out if the doctor is concerned that there may be something more serious going on. Otherwise there is no benefit in having these done.

Once your doctor has confirmed that there is nothing to worry about, and you are satisfied that

you are happy with his advice, DON'T worry. Worry is unhelpful. You need to find ways to maintain your activity levels.

Stay as active as possible without overdoing it. Lying down for longer than 2 days can be detrimental to healing. Don't spend too much time away from work if you are employed. As soon as possible, find ways of staying active with work tasks that don't flare up your pain.

If the doctor recommends short-term medicine, then this can be helpful. Painkillers are most commonly Paracetamol and perhaps non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

### Remember:

The point is that most low back pain resolves. It is tempting to lie down but this can lead to pain that lasts longer. The trick is to stay as mobile as possible without flaring up.