

Diagnosing Back Pain Based on Your Symptoms

Diagnosis: Herniated Lumbar Disc	Diagnosis: SI Joint Dysfunction (SI=sacroiliac)	Diagnosis: Lumbar Spinal Stenosis	Diagnosis: Strained Hamstring or Proximal Hamstring Tendinopathy
Symptoms	Symptoms	Symptoms	Symptoms
Stiffness, viselike Lower Back Pain	Pain at SI joint	Lower Back Pain	Hurts at toe-off during walk/run
Pain worse with sitting than standing	"My back feels like it needs to be cracked"	No pain with sitting; standing/walking increases pain	Pain in sitting
Pain/numbness/tingling (sciatica)down back of leg	"Pain/numbness/tingling (sciatica)down back of leg"	Pain/numbness/tingling (sciatica) down front or back of thighs; "Pain at bottom of butt at sits bone (ischial tuberosity)"	Pain bending over
Lying on one side worse than other side	Pain lying on back	Low back pain when wake in the morning	Pain at bottom of butt at sits bone (ischial tuberosity)
Pain with sneeze or cough	Pain in butt/piriformis muscle	Pain decreases as begin to move after waking	Hamstring weakness
sciatica without low back pain	Pain climbing stairs	Long walks greater than 10 minutes increase leg symptoms	Tenderness at hamstring attachment on sits bone
Lower Back Pain upon waking in the morning	Headache	Weakness in leg(s)	No sensory issues
Decreased light-touch sensitivity in leg	Recent fall onto butt	Decreased leg reflexes	Sleeping is usually fine in any position
Weakness anywhere in leg	Recently hit head	Trip over toes	
Trip over toes			
Decreased leg reflexes			
Bowel or bladder changes			
Do's and Don'ts:	Do's and Don'ts:	Do's and Don'ts:	Do's and Don'ts:
Do:	Do:	Do:	Do:
Avoid painful positions	Avoid painful positions	Walk in pool if does not increase pain	Exercises that don't increase pain, e.g., spin, swim, weight-lifting, etc.
Brace self when sneezing or coughing	Lie on side with pillow between legs	Roll on side to get out of bed	Ice tender areas
Lie on side with pillow between legs	Lie on back with pillow under knees	Walk if does not increase pain	Kinesiotape hamstring
Lie on back with pillow under knees	Use heat or ice on back whichever feels better	Avoid painful positions	Hip flexor and IT band stretches
Use heat or ice on back, whichever feels better	Walk if does not increase pain	Lie on side with pillow between legs	eccentric hamstring exercises
Walk, if does not increase pain	Walk in pool if does not increase pain	Lie on back with pillow under knees	dynamic hip and ankle mobility exercises
Walk in pool if does not increase pain	Roll on side to get out of bed	Use heat or ice on back - whichever feels better	Progressive core stabilizing and strengthening exercises
Roll on side to get out of bed	Progressive core stabilizing and strengthening exercises	Progressive core stabilizing and strengthening exercises	
Progressive core stabilizing and strengthening exercises		Before getting out of bed in morning, stretch low back; 1. hug knee to chest 2. roll bent knees side to side	
Don't:	Don't:	Don't:	Don't:
Bend/flex low back be sure to hinge through hips	Do activities that spread legs such as getting out of car one leg at a time	Bend low back backwards	Stretch hamstrings
Lift heavy objects	Stretch hamstrings	Stretch hamstrings	Do activities that increase pain
Stretch hamstrings	Lift heavy objects	Lift heavy objects	
	Frequent stair climbing		