



Spine Center



Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center



HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

If you are experiencing back pain, you're not alone. About 84 percent of adults experience back pain at some point in their lives. In the vast majority of cases, the pain goes away over time. It can be frustrating to just wait, but for most people, further treatment is not necessary.

If your pain doesn't go away, the specialists at the [Spine Center](#) at **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center** are here to help.

Our providers take a patient-centered approach to care. The goal is to deliver as much treatment as is needed to relieve your pain while avoiding costly procedures that may not be necessary. To help you better understand the typical course of treatment, here are the answers to a few commonly asked questions.

What causes low back pain?

Most pain is the result of wear and tear in the bones, discs and joints of the back. In other cases, there's something else causing the pain, like a sprain, an inflamed nerve or herniated disc. Usually, it feels like dull ache through the back, buttocks and upper thighs. Sometimes, it's a sharp pain that comes all at once when you move a certain way.

How is back pain treated?

For most patients, the pain will go away over time. But if your pain lasts for more than six weeks, you may need more medical attention. At the Spine Center, we start with the least invasive treatments and take things from there. An initial recommendation may include hot and cold packs, over-the-counter pain medication, physical therapy, or exercise.

I waited six weeks and it still hurts. Now what?

If rest and conservative interventions like physical therapy and hot and cold packs don't help, it may be time to see a specialist. Your primary care physician will recommend one to you. The specialist may recommend options like a trigger-point injection or a non-opioid pain medication. If that still doesn't help, they may recommend an injection under fluoroscopy (a procedure that uses a real-time X-ray to

help guide the physician in delivering the injection).

The specialist says I may need an injection. Why do I need a separate appointment for that?

Because pain often goes away on its own, an injection is not always initially prescribed. The specialist will conduct a thorough assessment, review your medical information and, as needed, confer with others on your care team to determine the next step in your treatment. The specialist will also need to communicate the treatment plan to your insurance company and await approval. That means you won't receive an injection under fluoroscopy on the same day as your initial visit with a Spine Center specialist.

Do I need my insurance to approve every injection?

It depends on your insurance company. In general, companies will approve treatments for a specific period of time, but it varies from plan to plan. If you do need an injection, it's important that you speak with your insurer to understand what they will cover.

Will I need an imaging test, like an MRI or CT scan?

You'll get the imaging if you need it, at the right time. Your specialist will ask you specific questions to determine the best approach to help you feel better. Remember, injection procedures aren't always necessary. Typically, imaging tests aren't ordered for early signs of back pain for a few reasons. In most cases, back pain goes away on its own. Also, the tests often do not help determine the cause of pain.

The staff at the Spine Center is dedicated to relieving your pain. If you have more questions, or would like to schedule an appointment, please call us at 617-754-9000 or email us at spinecenter@bidmc.harvard.edu.
