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## HOW TO NAVIGATE LOW BACK PAIN?

### LOW BACK PAIN IS COMMON AND NORMAL:

At least 90% of people will experience back pain in their lifetime and although it can be aggravating and distressing, it is none the less common and normal. Most episodes resolve fully and quickly within 6-weeks without any medical treatment at all. If your back pain happens to be persisting or recurs on a regular basis, remain optimistic: similar to migraines, depression and the common cold, it doesn't mean something seriously bad is happening; that said, you would likely benefit from checking in with your healthcare provider. We can help.

### MORE PAIN DOES NOT MEAN MORE DAMAGE:

The amount of pain, even severe pain, is not usually related to tissue damage. Instead, how much pain we experience seems to be more a reflection of our general health, sleep quality, stress levels, fitness, emotional state, mood, and our previous experiences with pain.

### SCANS ARE RARELY NEEDED:

Scans (i.e. MRIs & X-rays) are only required in about 2-3% of cases of low back pain. The overwhelming majority of people with low back pain will not need scans for diagnosis or treatment. Interestingly, research has shown that people who don't have low back pain have the exact same imaging findings as people with low back pain. Findings like disc bulges, disc degeneration and facet joint arthritis are all normal age-related things that have zero correlation with pain. Just like wrinkles and grey hair.

### PROLONGED AVOIDANCE OF ACTIVITIES AND BED REST ARE NOT HELPFUL:

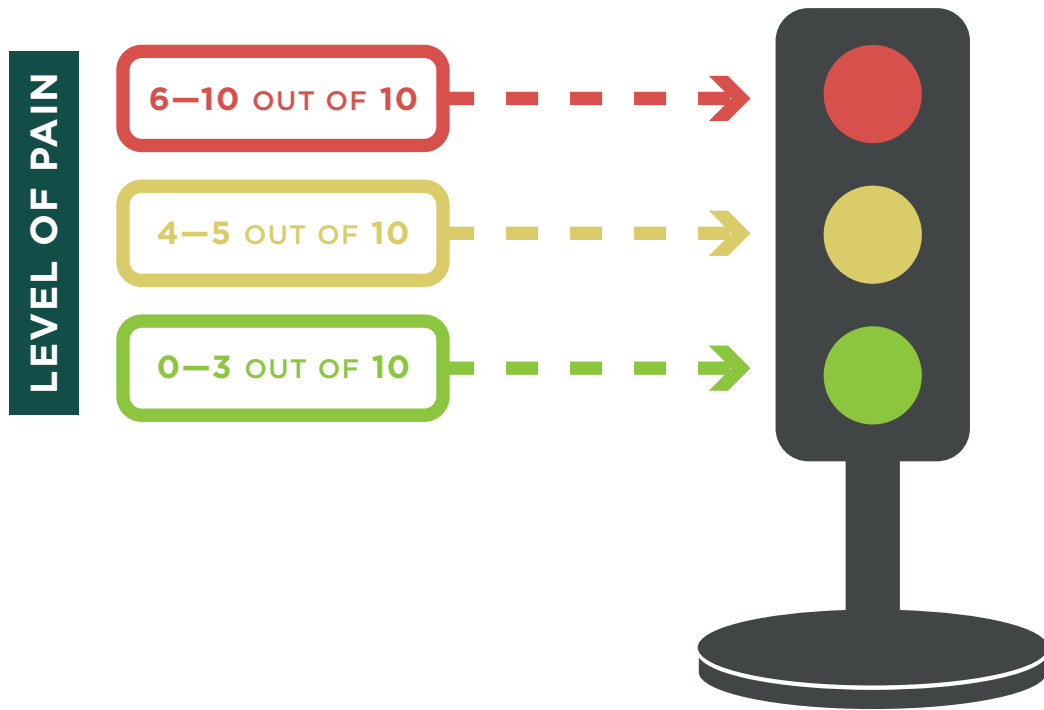
In the first couple of days after an episode of back pain, it makes sense to stay away from aggravating positions and activities, but it's important to keep moving. Start to gradually move more and more and resume normal activities as soon as possible. The research strongly suggests that prolonged bed rest and activity avoidance are not only unhelpful but can delay recovery.

### EXERCISE IS GREAT AND SAFE FOR BACK PAIN:

As you gradually resume your normal daily activities, start to incorporate exercise into your weekly routine. The type of exercise you choose doesn't seem to matter much, so pick something you enjoy and gradually start doing more of it! Expect to feel some pain and soreness when you first start out - this response is normal but necessary to get your muscles and body used to working again. Remind yourself regularly that you can be sore but safe.

## GETTING MORE ACTIVE? USE THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM:

Red light activities are ones that consistently increase pain, so we do less of them initially. Yellow light activities will cause some pain or discomfort and so we proceed with some caution. Green light activities we continue with as usual.



## RECOVERY IS NON-LINEAR:

It is important to remember that your symptoms will fluctuate from week to week and day to day. This is the nature of almost all injuries and is the normal part of the road to recovery. Fortunately, the prognosis is good for back pain and when looking over a 6 week period of time, you should notice a positive trend - less pain and more function.

