

# Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (LBP)



Low back pain is one of the leading causes of disability in the U.S., with more than 80% of Americans experiencing it at some point in their lives. Imaging tests are often used to diagnose the severity of low back pain, but in cases where no underlying condition is suspected, avoiding such tests can reduce unnecessary radiation exposure and help lower healthcare costs.<sup>1</sup>

## Did you know?

- X-rays, MRIs, and CT scans are often used to figure out how severe a problem is.
- Doctors suggest avoiding extensive imaging for back pain unless there are severe signs or symptoms that something is wrong, like numbness or weakness in the legs. Too much imaging can lead to unnecessary radiation exposure, invasive tests, and even result in infection.
- Usually, back pain gets better in about a month, and people can manage the pain with simple techniques.

## Self-help techniques:

- Consult your provider.
- Avoid bed rest, lifting heavy objects, twisting, and bending.
- Use heat and ice.
- Use non-narcotic pain relievers.
- Remain active.
- Avoid opioids to treat common or low back pain.
- If approved by your doctor, try light walking and complementary care therapies such as massage and/or physical therapy.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iha.org/previous-initiatives/low-back-pain/>