

Twenty Questions to Diagnose Back Problems

A number of things can cause back trouble. This simple questionnaire can help provide important clues to what's at the root of your back problem. Answer as many questions as you can and take a copy of this section to your doctor when your back needs medical attention.

1. Do you have a history of back problems? _____
2. What is the major complaint? _____
3. When did the pain, stiffness, or symptoms begin? _____
4. Did it begin gradually or suddenly? _____
5. Were you sick in any way when it began? _____
6. Do these symptoms disturb or prevent sleep (awaken you with pain)?

7. Is this the first experience of this kind? _____
8. Is the pain unrelenting? _____
9. Is the pain intermittent? _____
10. Is the pain sharp, dull, burning, aching, cramping, or shooting? _____

11. What do you suspect the problem was caused by? Check all that apply. _____
____ Injury.
____ Overweight.
____ Poor posture.
____ Stress/tension.
____ Menstruation.
____ Illness.
____ Pregnancy.
____ Overexertion.
____ Other.
Explain. _____
12. When does the problem annoy you the most? Check all that apply.
____ At work.
____ When lifting.
____ When in bed.

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- When bending.
- When stressed.
- When fatigued.
- When coughing or sneezing.
- When sitting.
- When standing.
- When driving.
- When carrying.
- In the morning.
- In the afternoon.
- In the evening.
- Other.

Explain. _____

13. Does the pain radiate or move in a particular direction? If yes, explain. _____
14. Do you experience muscle spasms? _____
15. Do you sleep on a soft mattress or a hard one? _____
16. Have you been under nervous or emotional strain lately? _____
17. Is there any redness, tenderness, or swelling? _____
18. Is there a daily pattern to the pain? _____
19. What helps relieve the pain? Check all that apply.
 - Heat.
 - Ice packs.
 - Exercise.
 - Bed rest.
 - Hot baths.
 - Muscle relaxants.
 - Massage.
 - Brace.
 - Walking.
 - Painkillers.
 - Nothing.
 - Haven't tried anything.
20. Are there any other factors that the doctor should be aware of? _____
