

Summa Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital offers many approaches to back pain.

Our physicians and staff are here to help you each step of the way.

- Emergency Department
- Diagnostic Imaging
- Pain Management
- Therapy Services (physical, occupational therapy)
- Surgical Services (neurosurgery)

For referral or appointments to our primary care physicians, neurosurgeons or chiropractors, call Summa Connections at (330) 379-5111 or use the Physician Finder at summahealth.org.

Treatments at Summa Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital

After reviewing the imaging reports, your physician will decide on the best treatment for your back. He/she likely will begin with a conservative non-surgical approach. Some elements may include the following.

- **Physical therapy:** A combination of treatments and exercises may be used. Treatment may include heat/ice packs, TENS (electrical stimulation) unit and ultrasound to help break the cycle of pain allowing muscles to begin healing. Exercises will help to stretch stiff muscles and strengthen supporting muscles.
- **Pain management:** Epidural injections or nerve blocks may be helpful for some patients.
- **Neurosurgery:** Only a very small percentage of patients will need back surgery. Should you need neurosurgery for your neck or back, Summa Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital has that, too. Many neurosurgical procedures are now minimally invasive, meaning smaller incisions that result in less pain, less anesthesia, less risk for infection and an easier recovery. Most patients can go home the same day of surgery or the next day and are able to return to work faster because of these techniques.

There is more good news. Summa Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital has the latest technology for this minimally invasive spinal surgery and the technology can also be used for neck problems.

We treat:

- degenerative disc disease
- spinal stenosis
- herniated discs
- bone spurs
- spinal instability
- compression fractures resulting from osteoporosis

Specific surgical procedures include:

- Lumbar decompression removes bone spurs. It may include fusion and/or grafting, which connects the vertebrae together.
- Cervical decompression removes the herniated disc(s). It may include fusion or plating to support the vertebrae.



What you should know about back pain

An overview of treatments at Summa Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital

Back Pain Overview

80% of all adults experience back pain at some point in their lives. Back pain is a leading cause for missed workdays. It also accounts for a majority of health care spending and doctor appointments.

There are many different causes, but often back pain is the result of muscle strain or ligament sprain. Jobs that require heavy physical work, which includes repeated bending, twisting, lifting, pulling and pushing, may contribute to back problems. More serious back problems can be a result of the aging process, normal wear and tear, or injury. Herniated disks or fractures are included in this latter group.

The good news is that the majority of back pain will resolve or get better over a short period of time. For those who continue to suffer, there is hope and help.



Did you know...

...80% of all adults experience back pain at some point in their lives?

What should you know?

Types of Back Pain

Just as there are many causes of back pain, there are many types of pain, too.

- **Acute vs. chronic** – Acute or short-term low back pain generally lasts from a few days to a few weeks. Most acute back pain is the result of trauma to the lower back or a disorder such as arthritis. Chronic back pain is pain that persists for more than two months. It is often progressive and the cause can be difficult to determine.
- **Axial vs. radicular and referred**
Axial pain stays in one area and does not travel into other parts such as legs or feet. The cause for pain is usually unidentified. Radicular pain, such as sciatica, radiates or travels to other body parts. The cause can be an injured disc in the spine, but the pain will be felt elsewhere. Referred pain will come and go, and move around.

When should you seek treatment?

Although many episodes of back pain will go away without treatment, there are times when you should seek medical attention. If you experience any of the following symptoms with back pain, contact your primary care physician or go to the nearest emergency department.

- Severe pain that does not respond to ice, rest and over-the-counter pain medicines
- Pain after a recent accident, fall or injury
- Pain is persistent and continues to get worse
- Pain is worse at night
- Abdominal pain
- Chest pain
- Fever
- Bowel or bladder incontinence
- Muscle weakness, tingling, pain or numbness in your lower body, legs or arms

If you have been diagnosed with osteoporosis, osteopenia, cancer or weakened immune system, you will want to contact your doctor if you begin to experience back pain.

Diagnosis

A diagnosis is necessary to determine what treatment you will need. Your physician will begin with a history and physical and may then order diagnostic imaging tests to give further information that will aid in his/her proper diagnosis.

- **History and physical examination:**
Your doctor will need to know your health history and how your back pain has transpired. Symptoms of back pain may be different to each patient and you may be asked to rate it on a scale from one to 10. How do you describe your pain?
 - Dull or sharp?
 - Constant or intermittent?
 - Piercing or burning?
 - Pulling or tight?
 - Throbbing or stiff?
 - Warm or cold?
 - Mild or severe?
- **Do any of these apply to your back pain?**
 - Feel it in certain positions or in one position too long?
 - Feel it in particular activities (sitting, bending, walking, cough, sneeze, etc.)?
 - Feel it more at certain times (morning, night, etc.)?
 - Stays in one spot or radiates to other areas (leg, buttocks, arm, etc.)?
 - Wobbly when standing or numbness in legs or feet?
 - Numbness in the back or genital area?
 - Tingling or pins-and-needles feeling in legs/feet or arms/hands?
 - Difficulty passing or holding urine? Bowel problems?

Depending on your symptoms and health history, your doctor may order a blood test and diagnostic imaging tests to confirm or rule out a diagnosis. These imaging tests are available at Summa Wadsworth-Rittman Hospital.

- **X-rays:** Traditional x-rays use low levels of radiation to view the bones and bony structures in the body. Your doctor may order an x-ray if he or she suspects that you have a fracture or osteoarthritis or that your spine is not aligned properly.
- **Computed tomography (CT) scan:** A CT scan allows your doctor to see spinal structures that cannot be seen on traditional x-rays. A computer creates a three-dimensional image from a series of two-dimensional pictures that it takes of your back. Your doctor may order a CT scan to look for problems including herniated disks, tumors, or spinal stenosis.
- **Myelogram:** This study combines dye with x-ray and/or CT scan. It can show the spaces between the bones in your spine.
- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI):** MRI uses a strong magnetic force instead of radiation to create an image. Unlike an x-ray, which shows only bony structures, an MRI scan produces clear pictures of soft tissues, too, such as ligaments, tendons, and blood vessels. Your doctor may order an MRI scan if he or she suspects a problem such as an infection, tumor, inflammation, or pressure on a nerve. An MRI scan is needed if the pain persists for longer than 3 to 6 weeks or if your doctor feels there may be a need for surgical consultation.
- **Dual-emission X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA or DXA):** DEXA is a scan that measures bone density. It shows if you have bone loss or brittle bones.

The Summa Difference

Summa's medical and professional staffs are dedicated to the service of others while constantly striving for innovations in patient-focused care. With Summa, members of the community have access to the resources of a large healthcare system in open, patient-friendly environments. With many locations in Medina, Summit and Portage counties, there is one close to your home or work.

For a referral or to schedule an appointment with a Summa primary care physician or specialist, please call (330) 379-5111 or use the Physician Finder at summahealth.org.

Continued on back