

The Checklist

Check off as many of the following questions that apply to you and bring this checklist with you to your doctor. Add additional notes where necessary. This questionnaire is also downloadable online at www.drjackstern.com, where you'll find a version that you can fill out directly on the page, print for your records, and/or take to your doctor.

How long have you been experiencing back pain?

- within the past six weeks
- for more than six weeks

Do you have a personal or family history of any of the following:

- degenerative disc disease
- osteopenia or osteoporosis
- rheumatoid arthritis
- psoriatic arthritis
- urinary tract (bladder) infections
- kidney stones, urinary tract or kidney infections, or kidney disease
- any type of cancer (if so, which kind?)

Does your pain get worse by any of the following:

- engaging in a sport
- doing a certain activity
- sitting for a long period

- Is your pain relieved by rest?
- Is your pain relieved by non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as Aleve (naproxen) and Advil (ibuprofen)?
- Does your pain radiate downward and stop somewhere? Where does it start? Where does it stop?
- Is your pain one-sided (on one side of your back or down one side of your leg)?
- Is the pain accompanied by a fever or weight loss?
- Does the pain occur when you stand, stretch, or sit?
- Is your pain worse in the morning and better at night?

- Is your pain better in the morning and more pronounced with activity?
- Does it intensify if you cough, sneeze, or move your bowels?
- Have you been injured or been in a recent accident?
- Have you recently participated in an activity or sport that you haven't performed in a long time (e.g., painting the house, raking leaves, playing dodgeball, exercising, skiing)?
- Do you have any soreness specific to a single muscle area, such as your hamstrings or quadriceps?
- Do you smoke?
- Are you overweight?
- Are you over the age of fifty-five?
- Do you have weakness in one leg that causes you to drag your foot?
- Do you experience tingling (a "pins and needles" sensation) or numbness in one arm?
- Do you have to turn your entire body to look over to the right or left?
- Do you feel pain in other areas, such as your shoulders, mid-back, buttocks, or thighs (but not below the knee)?
- Is it hard to stand up straight and get up out of a chair?
- Do you play tennis or golf?
- Was the onset of pain sudden and upon performing a specific act, such as bending to pick something up off the floor or reaching for a heavy box on a shelf?

How would you describe your pain?

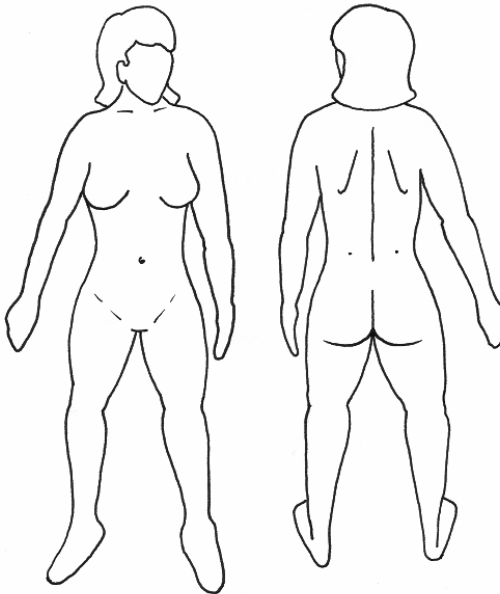
- throbbing
- dull
- sharp
- burning
- shooting
- electrifying
- constant
- intermittent

- Does your pain serve you in any way? Are you addicted to your pain?
Have you thought about what life would be like *without* the pain?

WHERE IS YOUR PAIN AND HOW DOES IT BEHAVE?

Draw your pain in the below figure. It can be a dot, a jagged line, a shaded section, and so on. If your pain travels from your back to somewhere in your front, make note of that in the margin and be as specific as you can. If you have a combination of issues, such as searing pain in one area and numbness in another, indicate that by using X's for the searing pain and Y's for the numbness. If the pain has changed over time, use more than one avatar and try to label it according to when the change occurred and if you know why.

Unlike other self-tests you may find in books and magazines, this one doesn't have a scorecard at the end. Your answers are your own. If you're



Where is your pain and how does it behave?

like most people, you may not even know what some of your answers mean, or exactly what to do with them. And that's okay. By the end of this book you'll know precisely how your responses will play into diagnosing and treating your pain. Once you've read further, and perhaps after applying some of my forthcoming suggestions, come back to this questionnaire to check in with yourself whenever you want. Or return to it when you think you can provide more comprehensive answers. If you weren't able to respond to one or more of the questions, you might be better equipped to do so once you've made more headway through the book. Mind you, there will be lots of opportunities to document your experience, as this book provides several self-tests and evaluations. But use this first checklist as your "cheat sheet"—your summary of main points related to your pain. Your responses could eventually turn into a game plan from which all treatment and preventive measures commence.