

***Low back pain***  
**can keep you from**  
**competing**



Children's Healthcare of Atlanta™

**Sports Medicine**

# Like your team, we have your b

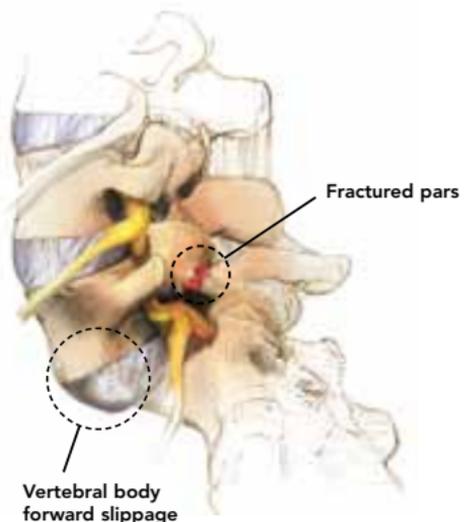
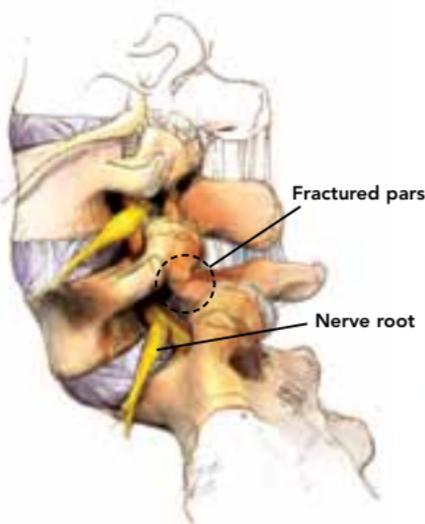
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta treats thousands of young athletes every year, so we are experienced in dealing with low back pain (LBP). This is a common injury for athletes involved in gymnastics, cheerleading, football and weightlifting. Symptoms may include:

- Back or buttock pain
- Pain from the lower back down into one or both legs
- Numbness, tingling or weakness in one or both legs
- Difficulty walking or sitting for long periods of time
- Limping

Some cases of LBP can be serious, especially if the injury is related to heavy or repetitive training activities. Most cases of LBP are caused by a strain (injury to a muscle) or sprain (injury to a ligament). These injuries can be painful, limit motion and require rest from competition and training.

LBP can also be caused by:

- **Spondylolysis**—A stress fracture in the vertebrae (a bone in the spine) of the lower back. This condition can be hereditary and brought on by growth spurts.
- **Spondylolisthesis**—A forward slippage or displacement of vertebrae. This can happen if spondylolysis progresses without treatment. If the vertebra slips too much, it may begin to press on the spinal nerves.



# Back covered

## What we can do

Our Sports Medicine Program has physical therapists that are trained in helping young athletes that are injured, want to prevent injury or want to enhance their performance. By stretching and strengthening muscles in the back and abdominal areas, physical therapy can help relieve LBP. Emphasis is placed on pain relief, core stability and sport-specific training.

Bracing and immobilization is usually required for the treatment of spondylolysis and spondylolisthesis, along with significant restrictions in activities. It also includes restrictions to compressive forces on the spine like jumping and landing. We work closely with our Orthotics and Prosthetics Program to get athletes the braces they need.

## What you can do

As with many orthopaedic aches and pains related to overuse, LBP can be relieved by resting from athletic activities that are increasing the pain and a combination of other treatments, including:

- Ice—Applying ice immediately after a workout can be an effective anti-inflammatory treatment.
- Medicine—Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can be another effective treatment. Your doctor may suggest an over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve), or may prescribe medicine. Take as directed.

There is no way to guarantee a young athlete will not develop LBP. Ways to minimize the risk of LBP include:

- Eat a well-balanced diet to keep a healthy weight and provide proper nourishment.
- Strengthen the back and abdominal muscles to stabilize the lower back.
- Maintain flexibility in the lower back to prevent strain on joints and muscles.
- Prevent overuse by resting and changing activities to avoid repetitive injuries.





Visit [choa.org/sportsmed](http://choa.org/sportsmed) for more information.



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*This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child.*