I'm recovering from an intense three weeks of back pain. I'll start back to work next Monday. When is it safe to go back to my bowling league and softball team?

Your decision to return to sports may depend on your symptoms and current level of function. Studies show that younger males have a faster recovery time and return to work sooner after an episode of low back pain. Sports participation seems to be linked with improved function and quality of life (QOL).

Talk to your doctor if you have doubts or concerns about returning to recreational activities safely. Physical activity has been shown to have a positive effect on overall health-related QOL. Unless there is a specific danger, you're likely to be given the green light to go ahead.

It may be best to ease into each activity. For example, before bowling full games with your team, spend some time practicing a few frames at a time. Beware that any adverse response may not show up the first day after bowling. You may want to try bowling a few lines over several days before getting back into the full action. The same return to sports progression is advised for baseball.