

Low Back Pain



Low Back Pain affects about 85% of people at some point in their lives. It can affect everyday tasks, work and social life. The pain may occur suddenly and be gone in a few days or weeks, or it may re-occur or never completely go away. *Early treatment* from a skilled physiotherapist is the key to a speedy recovery for anyone suffering low back pain.

How YOUR back works:

Your back is a complex structure made up of interconnecting systems:

- The bones or vertebrae that make up the spinal column are separated by discs, which are shock absorbers that support and distribute the weight of your body.
- The spinal cord is housed and protected within the spinal column. Major nerves that connect the spinal cord to other parts of the body pass through the spaces between the vertebrae.
- The spinal column is wrapped tightly in ligaments and supported by muscle.
- The muscles of the lower back, pelvic floor and core work together to support the spine.



The chances of stressing, straining or injuring your back whilst undertaking normal, everyday activity are therefore quite high.

More than 70 per cent of back problems begin during routine daily activities.

Causes of Low Back Pain

Back pain has many causes and takes many forms. A few are described below:

- **Postural Stress** – poor posture stresses your spine. The soft tissue becomes overstretched, muscles fatigue, and joints and nerves are put under increased pressure.
- **Muscle Strains** – minor back muscle spasms quickly improve on their own. More severe strains will need physiotherapy treatment to relieve pain and promote healing.
- **Disc Injuries** – discs are the shock absorbers of the spine and are anchored to the vertebrae, above and below, so they cannot slip out of place. The disc has a soft, jelly-like interior that can bulge in response to mechanical stresses such as lifting and twisting.
- **Arthritis** – vertebral joints can be affected by degenerative arthritis, causing inflammation within the joint and the growth of bony spurs on the edges of the vertebrae.

Low back pain may be isolated to the back or it can radiate to the lower abdomen, groin, leg or foot. Symptoms such as pins and needles, numbness or burning in the leg or foot region that accompany the pain are an indication of severity and should not be left untreated.

Will it EVER get better?

On average 90 % of people with acute low back pain will recover within 12 weeks. **EARLY TREATMENT** is the key to ensure a faster, complete recovery.

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Physiotherapy Treatment

Early activity and exercise are the key to successful recovery from low back pain. **Bed rest for more than one to two days has been shown to delay recovery.**

Physiotherapists are experts in human movement and the management in low back pain. They understand how your muscles, bones, joints and ligaments work and how low back injuries occur.

Depending on the symptoms, timeframe and severity of your injury, the physiotherapy program may include:

- Manual therapy such as massage, joint mobilisations or manipulations
- Education about posture and lifting techniques, and conditioning exercises to prevent recurrence
- Posture retraining
- Other Techniques to reduce pain: pain relieving machines, heat, ice or acupuncture
- Exercises to stretch and strengthen the appropriate muscles are also a very important part of your recovery. Strengthening of your low back muscles, core muscles and pelvic floor muscles are essential for a full recovery and to reduce the risk that your pain will return.

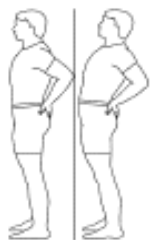
Here are some sample **exercises** for low back pain:

Side to side stretch:



- Lie on your back, with your feet flat on the floor.
- Keeping knees together, move knees gently to one side (as far as comfortable). Repeat to the opposite side.
- Complete 20 times, twice a day.

Low Back extension:



- Stand with feet shoulder width apart, and hands on hips.
- Slowly arch backwards into a stretch sensation, then return to start position.
- Complete 5 times, twice a day.

Glute muscle stretch:



- Lie on your back, with your feet flat on the floor. Cross one leg on top of the other.
- Pull knee across to the other opposite shoulder. Repeat with other leg
- Hold for 20 seconds, Complete 2 times on each leg, twice a day.

Beginner Core exercise:



- Lie on your back, with your knees bent.
- Gently draw in your pelvic floor and draw your belly button towards your spine to tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Hold for 2-3 breaths, Complete 5-10 times, twice a day.

These exercises have been provided as a guide. In the absence of a visit with a qualified health care professional information in this handout must be considered as an educational service only.

Sapphire Coast Physiotherapy are happy to discuss your low back pain further. A physiotherapist can complete a thorough assessment of your back and symptoms to develop the best treatment plan to treat your symptoms. For more information, or for an appointment, please phone your nearest clinic.

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