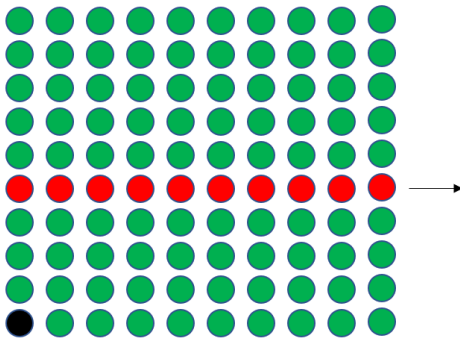


ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN

Acute low back pain is defined as having pain in the lower back which has lasted for less than 3 months. Low back pain is very common, it is unpleasant and distressing especially when it affects one's mobility and ability to work.

BACKGROUND

90% of people with low back pain do not require urgent medical attention. Low back pain can be associated with over-straining but often, it may or may not be associated with a specific injury. Sometimes, these incidences may be associated with psychosocial or lifestyle stresses such as an increased workload or insufficient sleep.



5 to 10% have associated leg pain with weakness or altered sensation due to nerve irritation or compression.

<1% have serious spinal conditions such as cancer, infection or fracture which would warrant urgent medical attention.

Most people with low back pain get better within 6 weeks¹. However, many different factors influence a person's pain experience and recovery can vary.

Even in conditions with associated leg pain, natural recovery has been shown to be good².

CAN PHYSIOTHERAPY HELP?

Your Physiotherapist will conduct a thorough assessment and will help you with the following:

- Advice on ways to help you with your activities.
- Provide an individualised exercise program to help with the restoration of your normal movements.

AGGRAVATING ACTIVITIES

You may experience pain when you perform some of the following activities:

- Getting out of bed
- Turning in bed
- Getting up from chair
- Bending to pick things up
- Sustained sitting/standing
- Walking

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION?

Please seek immediate medical attention if you have any of the following:

- Progressive weakness in your legs
- Loss of bowel and/or bladder control
- Numbness in the groin area

Disclaimer: The material contained in these information sheet is intended as a guide only and does not constitute advice or treatment. For further information please see your qualified healthcare professional.

MANAGEMENT/TREATMENT

Acute low back pain is often managed conservatively to great effect. Below are things that you can do to help you manage your acute low back pain.

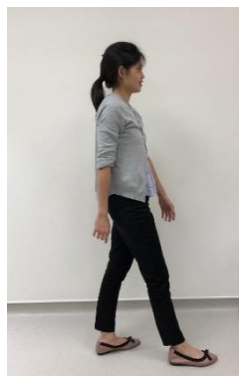
- Tummy breathing



In a relaxed position, breathe in to your stomach and breathe out slowly.

Simple hip knee bending movements can also help in the initial phase of your pain.

- Stay active



Modify activities and pace yourself (doing small bits often) in the first few days. Go for short walks if you can.

Gradually increase your activity level based on the duration you can tolerate.

- Do not lie in bed for too long as that could make you feel stiff and weak.

TIPS TO HELP YOURSELF

- Stay active and move as tolerated
- Balance movement with rest
- Do not stay in a sustained position for long periods
- Take your prescribed pain medication as needed

ITS PAINFUL WHEN I MOVE, SHOULD I STOP?

Movements may be painful initially but it does not mean that you are causing damage

CAN I PREVENT MYSELF FROM GETTING LOW BACK PAIN?

There is no way to prevent getting low back pain. But you can reduce the risk of getting low back pain by following the below tips.

- Maintain an active lifestyle
- Keep a healthy weight
- Quit smoking
- Make sure you have a balanced diet
- Having restful sleep

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REFERENCES

1. NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation. (2016). *Management of people with acute low back pain: model of care.*
2. el Barzouhi A, Vleggeert-Lankamp CL, Lycklama à Nijeholt GJ, et al. (2013). Magnetic resonance imaging in follow-up assessment of sciatica. *The New England Journal of Medicine*; 368: 999-1007. doi:10.1056/NEJMoa1209250