



infosheet

Low Back Pain

Low back pain is the most common reason for Australians to consult an osteopath or physiotherapist – 70% of us experience this debilitating condition at some stage in our lives.

While most episodes should resolve if you keep moving, there are things you can do to shorten the period of pain, reduce the intensity and avoid re-occurrences.

What should I do if I have back pain?

It is important to be evaluated by an appropriately qualified professional to first rule out the rare but serious causes of back pain and then identify factors that are contributing to your pain. Then, your practitioner can provide therapy and advice to help relieve pain and reduce the risk of re-occurrences.

Why does my back hurt?

In most cases, low back pain is caused by irritation of pain nerves, bedded in the discs, joints and soft tissues rather than because of tissue injury, inflammation or disease. Many people will have arthritis or disc bulges but as these changes are also found in people without pain they are not necessarily the cause of pain. Pain can be provoked by not enough movement or muscle support and also by excessive loads.



Has my back gone out?

Probably not. Thankfully, your spine is built so that it takes a lot of force to cause a dislocation. However, pain can cause local muscles to contract, limiting movement and holding you in an awkward position. This is what people are referring to when they say their back has gone out. In these cases, therapy is focused on settling pain and restoring movement.

Do I need X-rays?

In most cases, X-rays and other imaging is not needed to diagnose the cause of low back pain. If imaging is required, we will request it for you or refer you to your doctor for further investigations.

Is there effective therapy for back pain?

Because back pain is such a frequent and debilitating condition, a great deal of research has been conducted to determine the best treatment options. Recommendations vary depending on contributing factors, so the first step is a thorough evaluation to determine both the cause of your back pain, and biomechanical factors such as mobility/stiffness and how well your back is supported by surrounding muscles. How you think about your pain, your self care strategies and activities of work and daily living are all important in understanding your condition and planning your care.

References: Australian Acute Musculoskeletal Pain Guidelines Group, (2003). Evidence based management of acute musculoskeletal pain, Australian Academic Press, Brisbane.

Hayden J, van Tulder MW, Malmivaara A, Koes BW. Exercise therapy for treatment of non-specific low back pain. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005, Issue 3. Art. No.: CD000335. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD000335.pub2.

Licciardone JC, Brimhall AK, King LN 2006 Osteopathic manipulative treatment for low back pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials BMC Musculoskelet Disord. 6: 43



Services provided by the Solutions team:

- Solutions Osteopaths and Physiotherapists can evaluate your problem, explain the cause of your back pain and discuss which therapies or self care strategies will return you to maximum comfort and ability. Therapies include targeted massage, mobilisation, manipulation, dry needling, ergonomic advice and specific exercises. If further investigations and medical management is indicated, we will discuss this with you and work with your doctor.
- Solutions offers a range of exercise therapies including individual programs and small group classes which provide safe and effective ways to improve mobility, reduce pain and avoid re-occurrences. We recommend that you first consult one of the practitioners for advice on the design of your exercise plan.

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