



World
PT Day
2024

LOW BACK PAIN: AN OVERVIEW

#1

Low back pain is the **leading cause of disability** globally

619 million people experienced LBP in 2020, that's **1 in 13** people

representing a **60%** increase from 1990

Cases of LBP are expected to **rise** to

843 million by 2050



Low back pain is common

LBP can be **experienced at any age**, and almost everyone will experience it at some time in their lives - thankfully it only becomes **chronic** (lasting more than 3 months) for a **minority**.



What causes low back pain?

90% of LBP is **non-specific**, this means there is no one specific structure (eg, joint, muscle, ligament, disc) that can be found to cause it, and it is not due to a serious or specific underlying disease.

LBP can often be **caused by a combination of factors** and even the best **scans** (like an x-ray or an MRI) **cannot identify a clear cause** for most chronic LBP.

Once your doctor or physiotherapist has examined you, they should be able to identify the small number of people with LBP who need a scan.



When to get help for your low back pain

Many people with LBP **recover with little or no treatment**. However, you should **consult your physiotherapist** or doctor after:

- **2-3 weeks** if your **pain is not reducing**, or **getting worse**, or is stopping you from doing your normal activities
- **6 weeks** if your **pain is staying the same**, even if you can still carry on with your normal activities

When could your low back pain be serious?

These symptoms are **very rare**, but you should contact a doctor if you experience any of them:

- **bladder and/or bowel symptoms**, eg difficulty passing urine
- **impaired sexual function**, such as loss of sensation during intercourse
- **loss of sensation** and power in your **legs**
- **feeling unwell** with your back pain, such as a **fever**
- you are **over 50**, have had a previous **history of cancer**, **aren't feeling well**, and have developed pain for no apparent reason

You should also **seek medical advice** if you have had a **traumatic injury** like a fall or been involved in an accident.

What types of treatments help low back pain?

Physiotherapists are specialists in the care of LBP, and can offer treatment tailored to your needs. Your treatment may include a combination of:



education to understand how to manage your pain



lifestyle tips including advice on physical activity, stress and sleep



physiotherapist-supervised exercise to improve strength and resume physical activities



simple painkillers, such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines

Why get help?

Chronic LBP can significantly impact your quality of life and is linked to other health conditions. The longer you experience LBP, the more likely it is that you will experience limitations in what you are able to do. Getting help can help you manage your pain and get back to doing your usual activities.

Among health conditions that may benefit from rehabilitation, LBP is the condition that the greatest number of people could benefit from.



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