



Low Back Pain

Definition: Low back pain is a term used to describe any one of a number of problems that cause pain in the lower back. Most people will experience low back pain at some point in their lives. Many will experience low back pain that occurs over and over again.

Common Terms: Low back pain is abbreviated as “LBP”, and is sometimes called lumbar spine pain. Other terms associated with low back pain include: bulging, herniated or ruptured discs; sciatica; spinal degeneration; spinal stenosis; osteoporosis; fibromyalgia; SI joint pain.

Typical Mechanism of Injury: Low back pain may occur for many different reasons. Poor posture, obesity, smoking, stress, poor physical condition, weak spine muscles, muscle imbalances, poor flexibility, and poor sleeping position can all lead to low back pain. Trauma such as falls, sports injuries or motor vehicle accidents can also lead to muscle strains or ligament sprains of the low back. Conditions such as herniated discs, scoliosis or osteoporosis may also contribute to low back pain.

Common Signs and Symptoms: Low back pain can be extremely variable. It can be dull and throbbing or sharp and stabbing. There can be muscle spasms and pain down the legs. This can be a sign of nerve pain, commonly associated with back pain. Low back pain is also often associated with stiffness and limited motion which may limit a person from performing daily tasks that are otherwise simple to perform, such as sitting, walking, etc.

Common Treatment: Once a diagnosis has been made – usually after examination and sometimes with the help of x-rays or MRI – treatment can begin. Initially, treatment is focused on relieving pain, stiffness and muscle spasms. This is usually done through rest, avoidance of irritating factors and medications. Therapeutic treatments such as electrical stimulation, ultrasound, ice, heat and massage may also be helpful. Ultimately, a rehabilitation program that focuses on flexibility, strength and stabilization of the low back, pelvis and trunk are usually key to helping improve the symptoms and prevent them from returning.

Prevention: Healthy lifestyles, flexibility, good posture, muscle balance and weight management are all components of preventing low back pain. Always using proper body mechanics when lifting and bending, are important aspects in preventing low back pain from returning.

Expectations: Low back pain symptoms vary from person to person. Expectations for recovery from low back pain are based upon the actual cause of the pain as well as the required treatment. Pain can last from days to months, and underlying factors will weigh in heavily as to whether or not symptoms return later.

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