

health link

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- family medicine
- nutrition consulting
- registered massage therapy
- laser hair removal
- chiropractic/active release technique
- physiotherapy
- naturopath
- orthotics

Low Back Pain: A Multidisciplinary Approach



Dr. Ed Jin
Medical Doctor

DIAGNOSIS:

There are a variety of conditions that can cause a patient to present with low back pain. My

main goal is to determine whether the pain is due to one of the usual causes or some of the less common and often more dangerous ones. The first group includes muscular strain, compression fractures, disc herniation and various arthritic conditions. The latter group may include problems with the spinal cord, aortic aneurysms and kidney stones/infections. A thorough history and physical exam can usually rule out most of the above conditions. Simple investigations such as urine/blood tests and xrays are often necessary to help clarify the cause. CT and MRI may also be useful in some very specific situations.

TREATMENT:

Low back pain therapy is aimed first at treating any correctable causes. If there are none, and one is simply left with an ongoing pain management problem, pharmacotherapy is of great value in providing effective analgesia. Over the counter medications such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen may not be quite enough. If that is the case, a variety of more effective prescription analgesics are available upon discussion with your physician.

OTHER TREATMENT METHODS:

There are certain types of low back pain which are quite amenable to a multidisciplinary pain management approach. These include regular physiotherapy, acupuncture, and chiropractic services. The evidence demonstrates that most causes of acute low back pain will resolve within about six weeks of onset and all of the above mentioned disciplines can and do play a role in effectively treating pain and getting the patient back on his feet.



Dr. David Lee
Chiropractor

DIAGNOSIS:

There are many different causes of low back pain. The first thing I would do is test to

make sure that the source of their pain is mechanical, ie. caused from muscles, joints, nerves, etc... If it is mechanical then I would proceed to figure out what the cause of their pain is largely through history, and physical examination. If I suspect that their pain is not mechanical, then I would refer them to a family medical doctor for some additional testing.

TREATMENT:

Most mechanical pain is caused by dysfunctional muscles. Although the source of their pain may come from joints or nerves, it is muscles that usually pull on these structures, thus creating pain. The main technique I use to diagnose and treat these muscles is called Active Release Technique (ART). ART is a specialized soft tissue technique that works to identify and treat these problems, mainly by breaking down scar tissue. Along with ART, I also prescribe stretching and strengthening exercises, as well as posture and ergonomic counseling to ensure that their pain doesn't keep recurring.

OTHER TREATMENT METHODS:

As stated, if I sense their pain is not mechanical, I would refer them to a medical doctor for further testing. If it is mechanical, I often incorporate other practitioners as needed. I would refer to acupuncture for pain and swelling, massage therapy for prevention or additional soft tissue treatment, and physiotherapist, pilates instructors, and personal trainers for rehabilitation exercises.



Mark McFadden
Physiotherapist

DIAGNOSIS:

Low Back Pain (LBP) is a generalized diagnostic term that poorly explains the underlying

cause of pain. It also poorly qualifies and quantifies the impairments due to LBP. A physiotherapy assessment for LBP is carried out to accomplish two primary objectives. First to establish whether the LBP is a systemic problem or a mechanical movement dysfunction, and second, when caused by a mechanical problem which body parts are the source of pain and dysfunction.

TREATMENT:

Be it bone, joint, muscle, tendon, nerves or disc, once the source of LBP has been identified than a selection of treatment methods and techniques are chosen and adapted for recovery. Treatment I would provide always includes a self-care management and physio care plan. Both incorporate use of heat/ice, specified and progressive exercises for pain management, movement and strength recovery. I use specific physio hands-on manual therapy skills to treat and also incorporate various electrotherapy treatments like electrical stimulation and ultrasound. Education of the "do's and don'ts" related to back care is an essential element of treatment.

OTHER TREATMENT METHODS:

On occasion refer to a GP for further diagnostic tests or medication. Very often I recommend incorporating complementary care of acupuncture & massage, ART treatment and nutrition counseling.





Mary Bamford
Dietitian

DIAGNOSIS:
As I Dietitian, I support the professionals who diagnose and treat

low back pain. I identify factors in your eating pattern and nutrition status that help you decrease pain and optimize healing. Nutrition factors include excess weight, high LDL cholesterol, low vitamin D levels and a disproportionate intake of dietary fats that promote inflammation.

TREATMENT:

The strongest evidence related to nutrition and back pain is with body weight. If you are overweight, losing weight lessens pain. As a dietitian I help clients find a satisfying and easy eating plan that allows them to lose weight and keep it off. I use proven techniques in cognitive behaviour therapy and motivational interviewing to convert change from a wish to a reality. Cravings, emotional eating, supersized portions and out-of-control eating are all manageable.

OTHER TREATMENT METHODS:

Research is emerging that other nutrition factors may contribute to back pain. High cholesterol may reduce blood flow to the spine and discs adding to pain. Insufficient Vitamin D may be a cause of moderate back pain in women. Inadequate fish and omega 3 fat intake may increase your inflammation. Even people already at a healthy weight can make changes to their eating that can lessen back pain.



Dr. Jumy Kim
Acupuncture
/TCM Doctor

DIAGNOSIS:
In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), to diagnose the type

and cause of your low back pain, I would ask about your medical history and the nature and causes of the pain. There can be many different factors that can cause back pain such as excessive physical work, pregnancy and childbirth, invasion of external cold and dampness, stagnation of Qi and blood and kidney deficiency, etc. A severe, stabbing pain suggests stagnation of Qi and blood in the area, while a dull ache indicates a "deficiency" condition. It is also important to establish whether the low back pain is acute or chronic and if it is acute, whether it is an exacerbation of a chronic condition. A tongue and pulse analysis can tell us about the type of low back pain and the effect it has on the body system as a whole.

TREATMENT:

After differentiating the patterns of the pain, acupuncture is used to treat the low back pain. I would insert small needles into certain pressure local and distal points of the body. The proper needle combination is used to allow the Qi, the body's energy, to flow more freely. Acupuncture has the effect of relaxing the muscles and relieving pain. Sometimes, I may prescribe herbal medicine or acupressure massage to assist further along in the treatment.

OTHER TREATMENT METHODS:

If low back pain persists, looking at various in office testing and other diagnostic methods may be used to be sure the root cause of the pain is not of a more serious nature. Massage, physiotherapeutic and chiropractic manipulations are recommended and can be very beneficial for low back pain.



Dr. Selene Wilkinson
Naturopathic Doctor

DIAGNOSIS:
Low back pain (LBP) is one of the most common chronic health

concerns in Canada. When a patient presents with LBP a detailed health history is taken that includes questions such as; Is the pain of acute or gradual onset? Was there trauma to the area? Does the pain radiate? Are there other symptoms associated with the pain? What makes the pain better or worse? Orthopedic testing is also used to understand the origin of the pain.

TREATMENT:

Acupuncture: The World Health Organization has recognized acupuncture as an effective treatment for low back pain. Acupuncture relaxes muscles and stimulates the nerves to provide a pain-reducing effect and a smooth flow of energy or "Qi" throughout the body.

Massage and Hydrotherapy: The use of massage and water therapies promote increased blood flow and muscle relaxation.

Homeopathic and Herbal Remedies: Homeopaths can also be effective in treating low back pain by using small doses of natural substances to support the bodies natural ability to heal. Herbal supplements may be indicated to decrease pain and inflammation.

Lifestyle Consultation: For many people, the cause of their back pain stems from poor lifestyle habits and/or being overweight. Weight loss and focusing on an anti-inflammatory diet full of good fats, a high intake of vegetables and limiting amounts of sugar and caffeine can be part of a holistic treatment to LBP.

OTHER TREATMENT METHODS:

Looking at other treatments such as physiotherapy and chiropractic services may also be beneficial. If something more serious is suspected, further lab testing may be required.



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