



## Low Back Pain

Approximately 80% of the population will suffer from Low Back Pain (LBP) at some point in their lives. The pain may be in the midline or radiate across to either side or down into the thigh. More severe cases involve pain extending down below the knee (sciatica) and there may be tingling or numbness in the foot due to nerve compression.

### Causes

An episode of LBP may result from trauma such as a fall or vehicle accident, physical tasks such as lifting or digging, it may come on gradually while sitting or people may wake up with pain. Often it can be difficult to attribute the pain to a single activity, though there will always be a cause.

### Characteristics

Identification of the precise anatomical structure causing LBP can be difficult. Episodes of pain that different people experience or even different episodes that an individual may have can vary significantly in their nature. Damage to the intervertebral disc has been implicated where people have pain that is associated with stiffness in the back, where the pain changes location at times, or when the pain varies depending on activity. Stenosis (a narrowing of the gaps where spinal nerves exit) can cause leg pain in older people that increases with walking and forces them to lean over or sit to get relief. The sacro-iliac joint can produce pain in certain circumstances and will sometimes be painful with activities such as hopping or skipping and the facet joints can be problematic in older people, but, according to Professor Nicolai Bogduk, rarely in younger people. Where trauma is involved multiple structures may be affected.

### Treatment

In about 75% of cases (higher in cases where the pain has been present for less than 3 months), it will be possible to identify a particular movement or exercise that will rapidly reduce the pain. This is known as a directional preference, however the exact movement will vary from person to person depending on their exact presentation. Sometimes, people will have noticed that there are particular activities that aggravate or ease their pain and generally in these cases, a directional preference will exist. A careful McKenzie assessment is required to identify this exact directional preference and it is critical to do so to obtain a rapid recovery. Often it will be possible to resolve the pain through specific exercises alone, while in other situations, physio applied mobilisation or manipulative procedures in the same direction may be required. Postural correction will often be very important. In a smaller number of people, a more general functional exercise approach may be required or core stability work (see our Clinical Pilates page).

Once your pain has resolved, we will teach you how you can manage your problem yourself to minimise the chances of recurrence.

*We employ professional, experienced, and highly qualified physiotherapists and we offer a range of services and products to meet the needs of our community. Open 6 days a week for your convenience in the heart of Mt Beauty. Home and hospital visits by arrangement.*

**To find out more make an appointment by visiting our clinic at  
5a Hollonds St, Mt Beauty 3699 or call us on 03 5754 1270.**