



Move Forward.[™]
Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life

Physical Therapy and Low Back Pain

Physical therapists, who are experts in restoring and improving motion in people's lives, play an important role not only in treating persistent or recurrent low back pain, but also in prevention and risk reduction. Physical therapists are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility — in many cases without expensive surgery or the side effects of medications.

If you have experienced low back pain, you are not alone. Approximately one quarter of Americans report experiencing low back pain within the past 3 months at any given time*. Low back pain often occurs due to overuse, strain or injury. This includes too much bending, twisting, lifting, and even too much sitting.

How Can You Prevent Low Back Pain?

- Keep your back, stomach, and leg muscles strong and flexible
- Keep your body in alignment, so it can be more efficient when you move
- Don't slouch—keep good posture
- Use good body positioning at work, home, or during leisure activities
- When lifting, keep the load close to your body
- Ask for help or use an assistive device to lift heavy objects
- Maintain a regular physical fitness regimen. Staying active can help to prevent injuries

What To Do When You Have Low Back Pain

In most cases, low back pain is mild and will disappear on its own. However, for some people, back pain can return or persist, leading to a decrease in quality of life or even disability.

Stay active and do as much of your normal routine as possible when you have low back pain. Bed rest for longer than a day can slow down your recovery. If your pain lasts more than a few days or gets worse, then you should schedule an appointment to see your physical therapist.





Move Forward.[™]
Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life

Page 2

See a health care professional immediately if you experience the following symptoms:

- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Numbness in the groin or inner thigh
- Pain that does not change with rest

How a Physical Therapist Can Help

Not all low back pain is the same and your treatment should be tailored to suit your specific condition. You should expect the following from a physical therapist:

- Individualized assessment: Your physical therapist will ask you a number of questions about your specific condition and will thoroughly examine you for problems with posture, flexibility, strength, joint mobility, and movement. Attention will be given to how you use your body at work, home, during sports, and at leisure.
- Individualized treatment plan: Once your assessment is complete your physical therapist will develop a plan designed for your specific type of back problem. This may consist of:
 - Treatment to decrease pain and restore mobility
 - Manual therapy techniques, including spinal manipulation, to improve mobility of joints and soft tissues.
 - Specific strengthening and/or flexibility exercises
 - Education about care of your back and training for proper lifting, bending, sitting, sleeping, and doing chores both at work and in the home

*Spine November 2006

To find a physical therapist, visit www.moveforwardpt.com

Acknowledgment: E. Anne Reicherter, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS and Ellen Hamilton, PT, OCS
All contents © 2009 American Physical Therapy Association. All Rights Reserved

