

Warning

If along with your low back pain you are having leg numbness, are unable to move your legs, are unable to pee or are having bowel incontinence, please make your way to your local Emergency Department or urgently contact your health care provider for additional guidance.

There are multiple causes of back pain. Clarify with your health care provider which class your type of back pain falls under. If it has been diagnosed as “mechanical low back/lumbar pain”, “non specific low back pain” or “low back/lumbar sprain”, the following information applies to you and is intended to assist you in improving your overall quality of life.

1. **GENERAL INFORMATION** (Please scroll down to “What is” section below)
2. **[OHIP FUNDED PHYSIOTHERAPY LISTING](#)**
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1.GENERAL INFORMATION

What is Mechanical Low Back Pain?

The lumbar spine is made of solid bony blocks joined by disc to give it strength and flexibility. It’s reinforced by ligaments and surrounded by large muscles that protect it.

In mechanical low back pain, it’s usually not possible to pinpoint which of these is the specific source of pain. Often, mechanical low back pain is assumed to be due to a combination of muscles and ligaments strains along the spine, wear and tear of discs and spine joints. These working parts are simply not moving and working as they should.

This type of back pain will usually not be detected by X-Rays and MRI scans.

The typical presentation of mechanical low back pain is a localized low back pain that worsens with movement and improves with rest.

We consider it chronic when it lasts more than 3 months.

What Should You do?

In addition to the treatment plan discussed with your health care provider, a few additional points need to be brought up to help you get your back moving properly again:

Combining different approaches is the best way to take care of your pain. Pain relief can come from a variety of remedies.

- o Consider getting a massage, acupuncture, going to yoga classes and feel free to discuss other remedies with your health care provider.
- o For short term mild pain relief, you may take over-the-counter medications such as Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen if you have no health contraindications.*(Please confirm with your pharmacist or your health care provider.)
- o Learn and use pain coping skills, such as relaxation and stress management to decrease your pain.

Keep moving!

Staying active and exercise help. Bed rest is not a treatment and beyond a day or two it can even prolong pain. Instead, keep moving within your physical limits.

- o Modification of your usual activities might be required.
- o Join a physiotherapy program near you.
- o If you do not have coverage for physiotherapy, the suggested exercises below can get you started.

How to Prevent Chronic Back Pain?

For most individuals, acute (less than 3 weeks) mechanical low back pain will resolve within 6 weeks.

- o To prevent it from becoming chronic remain as active as tolerated.
- o When choosing a physical activity, make sure it doesn't worsen the pain once stopped and that the pain doesn't further spread.

Basic Exercises

Exercises that stretch your back and strengthen the muscles of your abdomen and spine can help prevent back problems. Strong back and abdominal muscles help you keep a good posture, with your spine in its correct position.

How to get started:

- If your muscles are tight, take a warm shower or bath before doing the exercises.
- Exercise on a rug or mat.
- Wear loose clothing. Don't wear shoes.
- Stop doing any exercise that causes pain until you have talked with your healthcare provider. You're back pain might be due to a cause other than "mechanical low back pain" or "Low back sprain"

The following exercises are a few exercise suggestions to get you started.

Extension exercise

(A)

- Lie face down on the floor for 5 minutes. If this hurts too much, lie face down with a pillow under your stomach. This should relieve your leg or back pain. When you can lie on your stomach for 5 minutes without a pillow, you can continue with Part B of this exercise.

(B)

- After lying on your stomach for 5 minutes, prop yourself up on your elbows for another 5 minutes. If you can do this without having more leg or buttock pain, you can start doing part C of this exercise.



Extension exercise

(C)

- Lie on your stomach with your hands under your shoulders.
- Then press down on your hands and extend your elbows while keeping your hips flat on the floor.
- Hold for 1 second and lower yourself to the floor.
- Do 3 to 5 sets of 10 repetitions.
- Rest for 1 minute between sets. You should have no pain in your legs when you do this, but it is normal to feel some pain in your lower back.

- Do this exercise several times a day.



Standing hamstring stretch

Standing hamstring stretch

- Put the heel of one leg on a stool about 15 inches high.
- Keep your leg straight. Lean forward, bending at the hips until you feel a mild stretch in the back of your thigh.
- Make sure you do not roll your shoulders or bend at the waist when doing this. You want to stretch your leg, not your lower back.
- Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat with each leg 3 times.

Cat and camel



Cat and camel

- Get down on your hands and knees.
- Let your stomach sag, allowing your back to curve downward.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds. Then arch your back and hold for 5 seconds.
- Do 2 sets of 15.

Quadruped arm and leg raise



Quadruped arm/leg raise

- Get down on your hands and knees.
- Pull in your belly button and tighten your abdominal muscles to stiffen your spine.
- While keeping your abdominals tight, raise one arm and the opposite leg away from you.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds.
- Lower your arm and leg slowly and change sides.
- Do this 10 times on each side.

Pelvic tilt



Pelvic tilt

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.

- Pull your belly button in towards your spine and push your lower back into the floor, flattening your back.
- Hold this position for 15 seconds, then relax.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Partial curl

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- Draw in your abdomen and tighten your stomach muscles.
 - With your hands stretched out in front of you, curl your upper body forward until your shoulders clear the floor.
 - Hold this position for 3 seconds. Don't hold your breath. It helps to breathe out as you lift your shoulders.
 - Relax back to the floor.



Partial curl

- Repeat 10 times.
- Build to 2 sets of 15.
- To challenge yourself, clasp your hands behind your head and keep your elbows out to your sides.

Gluteal stretch



Gluteal stretch

- Lie on your back with both knees bent.
- Rest your right ankle over the knee of your left leg.
- Grasp the thigh of the left leg and pull toward your chest. You will feel a stretch along the buttocks and possibly along the outside of your hip.
- Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.
- Then repeat the exercise with your left ankle over your right knee.
- Do the exercise 3 times with each leg.

Side plank



Side plank

- Lie on your side with your legs, hips, and shoulders in a straight line.
- Prop yourself up onto your forearm with your elbow directly under your shoulder.
- Lift your hips off the floor and balance on your forearm and the outside of your foot.
- Try to hold this position for 15 seconds and then slowly lower your hip to the ground.
- Switch sides and repeat.
- Work up to holding for 1 minute.

- This exercise can be made easier by starting with your knees and hips flexed toward your chest

References

https://www.summitmedicalgroup.com/library/adult_health/sma_low_back_pain_exercises/