

ACUTE MECHANICAL LOW BACK PAIN

Low back pain is the most common musculoskeletal problem and in most cases usually improves within a few weeks or months. Acute means the pain has lasted less than 4 to 6 weeks and Mechanical means the pain originates from the joint, bone or the soft tissue supporting the spine.



Causes:

Sometimes, a specific trauma or strenuous activity may cause the pain. However, 80% of the time, the specific source of the pain is not found.

Mechanical back pain implies the source of pain is in the spine and/or its supporting structure. The surrounding muscles and ligaments may develop reactive spasm and pain.

It is sometimes the result of poor posture or lifting something awkwardly and can develop suddenly or gradually.

It tends to get better or worse depending on position and often feels worse with movement.

Symptoms:

- Pain primarily in the lower back.
- Pain radiate (spread) to the buttocks and thighs
- May also experience spasms with mechanical back pain.
- Difficulty bending down or lifting things.

Diagnosis:

A careful evaluation of your medical history and physical examination will help your GP or physiotherapist to determine if you have mechanical back pain.

If your GP or physiotherapist has determined your back pain is mechanical, additional testing is not usually necessary. Your GP or physiotherapist will consider referral for further investigation where deemed necessary.

Treatment:

The treatment involves pain management and exercises.

Self-management includes applying Ice pack for first 48-72 hours to reduce inflammation and then heat pack for pain. Heat or Ice packs to be applied for 15-20 mins only and wrapped in cloth or towel.

Do not maintain one single position such as sitting/ standing for long time and keep mobile.

Activities can be painful but encourage yourself to do as much as possible within pain limit as this will help with recovery

Physiotherapist will prescribe you simple exercises to build strength and flexibility in your back and leg muscles.

Exercise considerations:

- Do all the exercises within pain free limits, stretch pain is common with exercises and that should ease off within 30 minutes-1 hour after having done the exercises
- Post exercise soreness is quite common and could be felt up to 48 hours after having done the exercise regime. This should get better as you continue with the regime over time
- If any exercise worsens your symptoms, stop that exercise and seek advice from your physiotherapist.