

PainOptions

Get The Basics Right How To Manage Low Back Pain



Thorough Assessment

This should include a detailed history about your injury, symptoms, general health and a physical examination to screen for significant injury or medical conditions. The need for further investigations and the treatment you receive will depend on the findings of this assessment.

Use of screening tools

Screening questionnaires help to identify additional factors contributing to your pain that can impact on recovery. For some people, this can help identify if different or additional treatment is needed.

Imaging may not always be helpful

Imaging (x-rays and scans) is only needed to rule out serious injury or pathology, which is uncommon in people with back pain. A thorough assessment helps determine if imaging is required for each person.

Individualised education

Understanding your injury and the cause of your pain is critical to your recovery. Individualised education should commence immediately and should be centred around your specific situation and what you can do to manage your pain and optimise your recovery.

Exercise and active treatment for all

Exercise has been shown to be helpful in assisting recovery and should commence at the earliest opportunity. What type and how much exercise differs for each person though. 'Hands on' treatments such as massage and manipulation may also be helpful but should not be relied upon in the long term.

Simple medication will be effective for most

If medication is required, simple analgesics such as paracetamol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories are often effective. Severe pain or 'nerve related pain' may require the prescription of targeted or more complex medicines and injections. Your doctor can advise you what is most appropriate.

Discuss your concerns and what your injury means to you

What you understand about your pain or injury has a very large influence on what you do. Frequently people equate pain with damage and avoid painful activities. Others might worry about escalating pain and future disability. You should discuss these thoughts and concerns with your healthcare providers and develop goals aimed to returning to function that are specific to your circumstances.

Monitor, modify or refer

Your healthcare providers should be formally tracking your progress at regular intervals (two, six, and twelve weeks) and consider modifying your treatment or referring to a musculoskeletal specialist if you are not recovering as expected.

These guidelines are based on current best evidence: Management of people with acute LBP. NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (2016)

Practical Solutions for Complex Problems