nlo

Understanding Lower Back Pain

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Low Back Pain by the Numbers

You can make your workplace environment safer for your back. Ask for a chair with a number of different ways to adjust it if you don't already have one. Adjust it so your back is upright and your feet are flat on the floor. Your computer monitor or monitors should be right at eye level so you don't have to alter the position of your neck to see your screen. Keep your mouse so that you can reach and use it comfortably. You shouldn't feel a strain in your muscles or your back when you move the mouse.
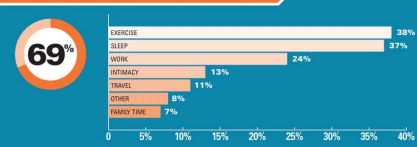
Move Forward.
Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life
www.moveforwardpt.com

Low Back Pain by the Numbers

61% of Americans experience low back pain

but there is a roadmap back to mobility, activity, and health with the help of a physical therapist. Physical therapists work with patients to help reduce pain and improve or restore mobility, in many cases reducing the need for expensive surgery or long-term use of prescription medications. A physical therapist will develop a customized plan for recovery based on your individual needs, so you don't miss out on the things you need to do in life.

61%

69% of survey respondents indicated that low back pain affects their daily lives.

69%

What is affected most?

Category	Percentage
EXERCISE	38%
SLEEP	37%
WORK	24%
INTIMACY	13%
TRAVEL	11%
OTHER	8%
FAMILY TIME	7%

(axis: 0 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40%)

WHAT IS AFFECTED?

EXERCISE · SLEEP · WORK · INTIMACY · TRAVEL · FAMILY TIME

Men (31%) are more likely than women (20%) to report that low back pain affects their ability to work.

40% / **30%** Those who are under 55 are more likely to report that their sleep has been affected: 18-54 (40+%) vs. 55 or older (30%).

What causes low back pain?

Much less common, the cause is a health condition such as:
- ✓ Lumbar spinal stenosis (a narrowing within the vertebrae of the spinal column resulting in too much pressure on the spinal cord)
- ✓ Osteoporosis (a thinning of bone tissue and loss of bone density over time)
- ✓ Degenerative disk disease (a flattening and stiffening of the disks between the vertebrae)

Many times, the exact cause is unclear; however, common causes include:
- ✓ Overuse, strain, or injury
- ✓ Inability of muscles, ligaments, and joints to work as they should
- ✓ Stress

What are people with low back pain doing about it?

TREATING THE SYMPTOMS

50% HEAT **30% ICE** — Most people try heat or ice to relieve pain.

Three out of four women take over-the-counter or prescription medication.

One in four limits their movement.

Movement: the often overlooked way to managing low back pain

"Most of us will experience low back pain at some point in our lives, but it does not mean we have to suffer through it. Patients tell me all the time: I wish I came to you sooner. With the right treatment, people can reduce or eliminate low back pain and get back to doing what they love."

— James Irrgang, PT, PhD, ATC, FAPTA, president of the Orthopaedic Section of the American Physical Therapy Association

4 IN 10
- Try exercise
- Never see a medical professional

Stay active, and do as much of your normal routine as possible (bed rest for longer than a day can actually slow down your recovery)

What will a physical therapist do for my low back pain?

After an initial examination to determine the cause of your pain, your physical therapist will design an individualized treatment plan. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Treatment may include:
- Manual therapy, including spinal manipulation, to improve the mobility of joints and soft tissues
- Specific strengthening and flexibility exercises
- Education about how you can take better care of your back
- Training for proper lifting, bending, and sitting at work and at home, as well as proper sleeping positions
- Assistance in creating a safe and effective physical activity program to improve your overall health

If your pain lasts more than a few days or gets worse, schedule an appointment to see a physical therapist.

A physical therapist will work collaboratively with other health care professionals to ensure treatment is comprehensive and consistent with your medical history. Patients in 46 states and the District of Columbia can go directly to a physical therapist for an evaluation of their low back pain and in most cases, may begin their treatment without a physician referral. Physical therapy is covered by federal, state, and private insurance plans

How can you reduce your chances of having low back pain?

Maintain a Regular Physical Fitness Regimen

Maintain a regular physical fitness regimen that includes regular strengthening exercises to improve the strength and flexibility of the back, core, and leg muscles.

See a physical therapist to ensure proper alignment when exercising. Fewer reps with good form are better than more reps with poor form. For more workout tips, visit http://bit.ly/H71Upu

Use Proper Body Mechanics During Activities

Use proper body mechanics while at work, play, or doing daily activities, such as lifting, shoveling, or gardening:
1. Use an upright chair with good low back or lumbar support
2. Position your computer monitor so the screen is at eye level, your head and shoulders are relaxed, and you don't have to crane your neck
3. Keep your mouse close to your body
4. Get up and stand straight and move around frequently, and do easy exercises at your desk such as backwards shoulder rolls

More About Physical Therapists

Physical therapists are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who apply research and proven treatments to help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility. Physical therapists have the most specialized education and expertise to help people with conditions such as low back pain restore and improve motion. Today's physical therapist is required to complete a graduate degree, either a masters or clinical doctorate, from an accredited education program.

To find a physical therapist near where you live, visit MoveForwardPT.com and select "Find a PT." You may want to consider looking for a physical therapist who is a board-certified orthopedic clinical specialist (OCS) or who has completed a residency or fellowship in orthopedic physical therapy. This therapist has advanced knowledge, experience, and skills that may apply to your condition.

Learn more about low back pain or find a physical therapist near you at **MoveForwardPT.com**.

APTA American Physical Therapy Association