

WHY DO I HAVE LOWER BACK PAIN?

COMMON QUESTIONS
& TREATMENT SOLUTIONS

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COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT LOW BACK PAIN

If you've ever had back pain, you know it can directly affect your quality of life, limiting simple tasks such as driving to work, playing with kids, and/or walking the dog. Considering the high prevalence of low back pain, many people are unsure as to which route to take or if any route is necessary at all. This report answers some common questions many people face when presented with back pain.

- I didn't have an injury or trauma so why does my back hurt?
- How likely is my back pain to reoccur?
- Are the results of my images correlated with my pain?
- Why are body mechanics important?
- Can Physical Therapy help my low back pain?
- What treatment techniques are best for my low back pain?
- What to look for in a Physical Therapist?
- Can Physical Therapy decrease my health care cost?
- Should I wait until my pain decreases before starting Physical Therapy?



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Back pain can affect anyone at any age and is not limited to physically demanding jobs, pregnancy, etc.

Back pain **will affect 60-80% of people at some point in life.**

Single episodes are less common with re-occurrence rates reported at **60%** within **3-6 months**.

Patients often report, “my back gave out” or “I threw my back out” several times a year.

Majority of the time, low back pain is NOT a result of major trauma, but a simple non strenuous repetitive activity such as picking up a light weight item from the floor, getting out of a chair, ect.



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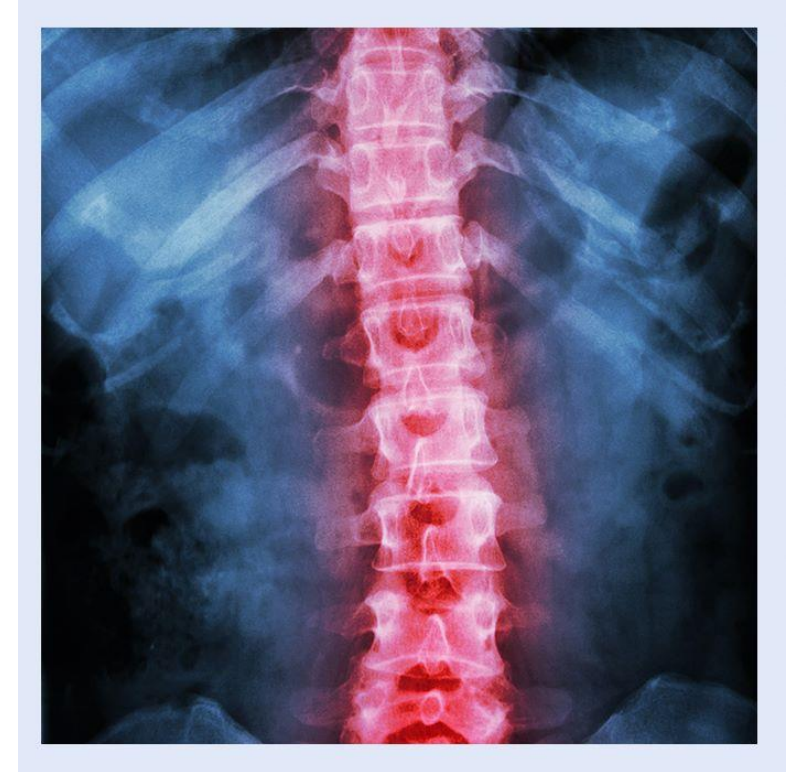
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Many patients rely on images (X-Ray, MRI, ect.) to give them a concrete reason as to why they are experiencing pain.

However, there is no relation between image findings and the amount of pain one will experience. For example, one person can present with horrible findings on images and have no pain while another person may present with a perfectly normal image yet have severe pain.

Most back pain is NOT the result of a serious spinal disease but often mechanical in nature.

Mechanical low back pain is defined as non-specific or “simple” low back pain in the lumbar region that is not related to serious pathology. Mechanical pain is the result of poor body mechanics.



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Body mechanics is how the body moves throughout life as it performs daily functions such as sitting, walking, bending, lifting, and etc. Without performing repetitive tasks using optimal body mechanics, areas of the body eventually “wear down” and “give out”.

Microtrauma is just as severe as microtrauma. Microtrauma is a small repetitive injury over a prolonged period, i.e., bending, lifting, carrying, ect. Macrotrauma is major trauma over a short period, i.e., a fall or car accident.

If you bend a paper clip a few times, it can still perform it’s function as a paper clip. If you bend it several times over and over, eventually it will “give out”. This is similar to **majority of low back pain**.



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CAN PHYSICAL THERAPY HELP MY LOW BACK PAIN?

Physical Therapists, now Doctors of Physical Therapy, are the movement specialist experts in treating low back pain.

Physical Therapists are highly educated in movement, therapeutic exercise, and manual techniques (i.e., manipulation and mobilization) to **restore optimal movement, free of pain, without the use of surgeries and pain medication.**

Poor body mechanics and movement could result in injuries, degenerative joint diseases, osteoarthritis, joint replacements, surgeries, prescription pain medication, and many other ailments.



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WHAT TREATMENT TECHNIQUES ARE BEST FOR MY LOW BACK PAIN?

Heat and ultrasound have shown outdated and unnecessary compared to hands on manual therapy and therapeutic exercise.

Studies show immediate analgesic effect of **manual therapy** followed by specific active exercises for chronic non-specific low back pain **significantly reduces** functional disability and pain intensity⁽⁴⁾.

Manipulation and mobilizations restore proper joint mobility and is an important aspect in Physical Therapy but is not the end all be all. The cause of why the joint is restricted needs to be addressed. Assessing one's movement is the key to solving the root cause.

If manipulating and mobilizing were the only treatment performed, without retraining the movement which caused the restriction in the first place, the joint will soon result back to it restricted state.



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Instead of managing symptoms with the endless treatment options available (medication, heat, ice, massage), a Physical Therapist can address the **root cause** of the problem by assessing and restoring proper movement.

Unfortunately, **not all Physical Therapists are created equal**. Find a highly educated Physical Therapist who hasn't fallen behind with outdated unnecessary treatment techniques. The **healthcare field is forever changing** and growing, and healthcare providers must continuously grow with it.



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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Physical Therapist should spend a good amount of one-on-one time with you instead of handing you off to work with an assistant or tech to perform exercises you can perform on your own at home. Treatment techniques such as heat and ice can be performed at home as well.

Why pay for services you can provide to yourself?

If you are not seeing changes within 1-2 visits, you're probably not on the right track. Physical Therapy education has come a long way. In previous years, a bachelors degree was required to obtain a Physical Therapy license. Today, individuals are required to complete a doctoral degree and pass a strenuous state exam in order to practice in their state. Those having bachelor degrees are not required to advance there education. This results in varying levels of care. If your Physical Therapist has performed post-Doctorate training such as a fellowship or residency program, there is a good chance he/she is on the course to excel to the top of their field and their knowledge base is expanded beyond the majority of their peers.



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CAN PHYSICAL THERAPY **DECREASE** MY HEALTH CARE COST?

Should I wait until MY PAIN DECREASES BEFORE STARTING PHYSICAL THERAPY?

Many people believe they must wait until low back pain decreases before starting Physical Therapy. Studies show delaying Physical Therapy may increase the risk for additional health care consumption and **COST⁽³⁾**.

Patients with early Physical Therapy intervention have a decreased likelihood of advanced imaging, additional physician visits, surgery, injections, and opioid use.

The sooner a Physical Therapist can address your pain, the better the prognosis. Bodies will continue to move, compensating around the pain. This results in increased stress in other areas of the body causing further dysfunction.



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"I am passionate about the field of Physical Therapy, constantly learning the latest treatment techniques and evidence. I strive for continuous growth to provide a level of care superior to others. I am pleased at the end of each treatment session knowing I gave 100%. I've spent the last 4 years practicing and it's my joy and privilege to return people to a pain free life, free of medication and surgery."

- Doctor Alicia Shugart, PT, DPT



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"Before seeing Alicia, I received physical therapy from two other healthcare providers and multiple physical therapists. However, I never felt any improvement following my visits or received the one-on-one attention and hands-on therapy that I desperately needed. Not only have I experienced tremendous improvement in my physical capabilities and a significant reduction in my pain level since I began seeing Alicia, but I am completely off of my prescribed pain medications. She not only concentrates on assisting me in feeling better physically but she talks with me and explains what she is doing and why and how it will help me in my daily life and overall. This is critical because she has helped me mentally and emotionally as well as my situation has been extremely difficult. She has taught me that successfully managing your pain takes not only physical exercises but mental fortitude. Alicia possesses the skills, education, and compassion that makes her an exceptional Physical Therapist. I am continuing my therapy with Alicia following her move from ARC and will always return to her for my physical therapy needs in the future as there is no one else that I trust.

I actually did an Internet search on the top personality traits for Physical Therapists simply from curiosity, and I was not surprised to find that Alicia possesses them all: determined, supportive, cool, compassionate, confident, resilient, fit, and health conscious."

- Karen, Patient 2016

DON'T TAKE OUR **WORD** FOR IT?

I just wanted you to know that I've been going to Alicia Shugart for PT associated with my scoliosis. I am really impressed with her knowledge and dedication. I think her specialization and fellowship that she is pursuing is exactly focused on my condition. Her confidence that this can make a difference actually inspires me to stick with the exercises and follow-up."

- Mark, Patient 2016

"My daughter had seen two other physical therapist and wasn't making progress until meeting Alicia. Alicia completely changed our mind about the importance of a good therapist. I high recommend Dr. Shugart. My daughter is back to dancing and I can be confident my child is in good hands. Alicia is a wonderful person who actually cares and enjoys her work."

- Sarah, Patient 2015



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Eur Spine J, 15 (suppl 2) (2006), pp. S192–S300

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3.) Fritz JM, Childs JD, Wainner RS, Flynn TW. *Primary care referral of patients with low back pain to physical therapy: impact on future health care utilization and costs. Spine.* 2012;37:2114–2121.

4.) Balthazard P, de Goumoens P, Rivier G, Demeulenaere P, Ballabeni P, Dériaz O. *Manual therapy followed by specific active exercises versus a placebo followed by specific active exercises on the improvement of functional disability in patients with chronic non specific low back pain: a randomized controlled trial. BMC musculoskeletal disorders.* 2012;13:162–162.



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