

# Zone 4

## Central low back pain



Pain in the low back affects around 85 % of us at some time during our working lives, to a level that prevents us from working for a time. It is very common and there are straightforward ways of managing it. There are many factors which may cause it, the commonest of which is previous injury. Studies have shown that damage is present in the low back in 40% of people aged 40 years, who have no symptoms. You are not alone!



The pain usually comes from damage to a disc, the cushion in the back between each pair of vertebrae. These discs can become torn from traumas earlier in life (often during the adolescent period, when we commonly overdo activities) and as we get older, a further, often minor trauma, such as bending and twisting to pick up a fallen item from the floor, can re-open that wound. One of the frustrations is that it may take a few days for the pain to come on, even two weeks. It can, therefore, be difficult to pin down the precise cause.

The pain is centrally located over the lower lumbar spine, worse on sitting, coughing, bending and lifting and often particularly bad with impact (such as missing a kerb or step when walking). It can be very debilitating, as you may now know! Many treatments have been suggested, some of which are contradictory, such as rest and exercise. In practice, the pain usually settles on its own after a period of a few days, to a few weeks. Certain features can make it better quicker and can allow the sufferer to carry on with their lives.

Treatment is directed at not only supporting the damaged area, so that it hurts less, but managing the secondary issues, such as the sometimes quite marked muscle spasm, which accompanies this type of injury. Wearing a lumbar support will act to tighten the abdomen (like having an instant 6-pack!), which transmits the weight of the upper body through into the pelvis, largely by-passing the lumbar spine. Massaging the muscles with gel from and APPLICATOR can make a big difference. To correct your posture, sitting on a gym ball can automatically put the lumbar spine into a neutral posture, allowing you to get on with work, life, etc, sooner. If the symptoms are bad, NUROFEN and CODEINE/PARACETAMOL combinations can help (always read the package insert) but are not a long term solution.

Working with a trained therapist to strengthen the core muscles is the best way to prevent repeated episodes of this pain. It is important, as the more episodes you have, the worse it becomes and the pain may then become constant.

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