



## What is Low Back Pain?

Most low back pain is triggered by some combination of overuse, muscle strain, and injury to the muscles ligaments, vertebrae and discs that support the spine. Over time muscle strain can lead to an overall muscle imbalance in the spinal structure. This leads to a constant tension on the muscles, ligaments, bones and discs, making the back more prone to injury or re-injury.

The causes of low back pain tend to add onto one another. For example, after straining muscles, you are more likely to walk or move differently to avoid pain. As a result you use muscles that are not sore to compensate, placing these muscles under strain that they are not used to.

## What causes Low Back Pain?

- Injury or overuse of muscles, ligaments, or joints in the back.
- Pressure on nerve roots in the spinal canal.
- Osteo-arthritis (joint degeneration), which typically develops with age.
- A herniated disc, often brought on by repetitive bending or motion, or a sudden strain or increased pressure on the back.
- Poor Posture.
- Increased weight.

## Herniated Discs- acute Low back pain

While a disc herniation may sound serious, most people return to normal activities within several weeks to months. There may still be some symptoms, but most people return to full function.

The spine is made up of a series of connected bones called “vertebrae”. The disc is a combination of strong connective tissues which hold one vertebrae to the next, acting as a cushion, by absorbing shock and reducing pressure on the spinal

A herniated disc usually happens when your back is bent forwards and a large amount of stress is put on the disc. Bending forwards opens up the gap in the vertebrae at the back of your spine and makes it easier for the centre of the disc to herniate outwards. This then puts pressure on the nerve fibres leading to pain, inflammation, swelling and other symptoms such as pins and needles and numbness.

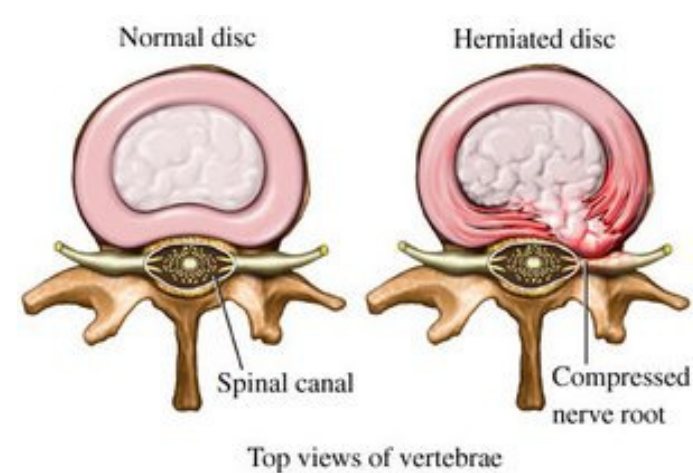


Image obtained from:  
<http://herniated-disc.blogspot.com/>

## Risk Factors

It is not clear why some people develop low back pain. However there are a number of risk factors that can increase the likelihood of pain occurring. These include:

- A job involving repetitive bending, twisting movements.
- A job involving heavy manual labour.
- Incorrect lifting and bending techniques.
- Prolonged sitting / driving.
- Heavy smoking
- Previous low back pain
- Increased age (over 40).
- Increased weight
- Poor fitness and muscular weakness around the lumbar spine.

## Advice

- Avoid any lifting, or bending for at least 3 months, allow your back to heal.
- Stay active, instead of lying in bed. Rest as required.
- Maintain a good posture, avoid bending or slouching when sitting.
- Use an ice pack wrapped in a damp tea towel or 25 minutes up to a maximum of hourly, to reduce pain and muscle spasm.
- Squeezing your bottom whilst sitting, 10 times hourly can improve circulation and improve healing of your back.
- Find a comfortable position in bed- lying on your side with some pillows between your legs is a good option.
- You may be stiff in the morning, so gently move your legs from side to side to increase movement.

## Physiotherapy treatment & Rehabilitation

- Reducing pain and inflammation.
- Joint mobilisations and manipulation.
- Soft tissue massage and therapy.
- Acupuncture and ultrasound therapy- to reduce pain and inflammation.
- Strengthening the deep stabilising and core muscles around your back and trunk to promote stability and prevent reoccurrence of pain.
- Mobility exercises.
- Providing postural and ergonomic advice and education regarding work and sport.
- Pilates training.
- General advice, education and reassurance

about your pain.



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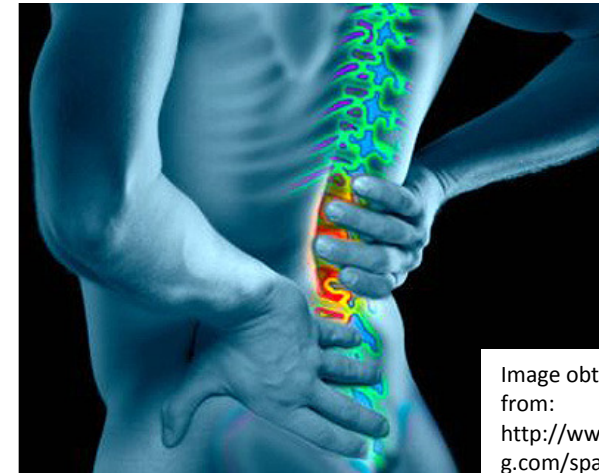


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