

FAST FACTS: Low Back Pain (LBP)

The lumbar or lower back region consists of five vertebrae (L1 – L5). This area of the spine is the source of most movement and flexibility and is the support structure for much of a person's body weight.

There are many other possible causes of LBP. The spine ages along with the rest of the body and can result in shrinking of the discs which allows vertebrae to rub against each other causing pain.

- **Possible causes of LBP**

- Strain/sprain of back muscles and soft tissue
- Spondylolisthesis – increased movement of vertebrae
- Degenerative disc disease (DJD) – loss of support between vertebrae
- Spinal Stenosis – narrowing of the lower spinal opening, pressure on spinal nerves
- Sciatica – pain in the area of the right or left Sciatic nerves
- Scoliosis – lateral “S” curvature of the spine can be mild to severe
- Osteoarthritis – breakdown of cartilage that cushions the joints
- Rheumatoid Arthritis – autoimmune disease that causes inflammation of the tissues
- Herniated disc – tear in the fibrous ring of a disc spine allows bulging of the disc
- Vertebral fracture – common in older adults, particularly postmenopausal women

- **Assessment**

- Characteristics of the pain (e.g. onset, location, effect of positional change)
- Precipitating factors – age, acute injury or trauma, obesity, frailty

- **Interventions**

- **Pharmacologic:** non-opioid (recommended acetaminophen scheduled dosing); NSAIDs or opioids short-term therapy (if severe) recommended.
- **Non-pharmacologic (Examples)**
 - Physical Therapy/Exercise
 - Relaxation techniques/Cognitive Behavioral Training
 - Massage
 - Hydrotherapy/Heat
 - Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS)
 - Distraction (e.g. reading, TV, activities, music, etc.)
- **Reassessment**

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References

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