



Exercise for Chronic Low Back Pain

Low back pain is one of the most difficult and costly medical problems in the industrialized world. It is estimated that 60-90% of adults experience low back pain at some point in their life.^{1,2} **Low back pain has become the most expensive benign condition today in America and the number one cause of disability in the working population.**^{3,4,5}

Carpenter and Nelson⁵ referred to what they called a “Deconditioning Syndrome.” They define this syndrome as a cyclical pattern of pain/avoidance of activity/deconditioning/and more pain. **Several authors^{3,4,5,7-17} agree with Carpenter and Nelson that decreased muscle strength is a major contributor to chronic low back pain.** These authors consider isolated strengthening of the trunk musculature essential for breaking this cyclical syndrome.

In a 1997 literature review, van Tulder et al⁷ concluded that “there is strong evidence that exercise therapy is effective for chronic low back pain.” Several authors^{7,9,10,11} have studied the effectiveness of general mobility, conditioning, and strengthening exercise for patients with low back pain. These authors concluded that in addition to strength and mobility gains, the diminishing of the fear and avoidance behavior, often noted with chronic low back pain, was also significant to their recovery.

From this information it can be concluded that exercise is a key component for the rehabilitation of chronic low back pain and decreasing fear avoidance behavior. Physical therapy intervention is integral in designing and guiding exercise programs for the rehabilitation of chronic low back pain.

At Body One Physical Therapy, our rehabilitation of patients with chronic low back pain follows the evidence presented above. **We strive for an independent exercise program to improve strength and mobility and decrease pain and fear avoidance behavior.** This is accomplished through a progressive home exercise program with minimal emphasis on passive therapies such as modalities. We invite you to let us provide your patients with the appropriate tools to help them manage their chronic low back pain.