

How can a physiotherapist help with back problems?

Physiotherapists are skilled in the management of back injuries. A physiotherapist will provide a comprehensive assessment of your back to determine the source of the problem, and to develop an individualized program to treat your symptoms.



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The Importance of Back Health

Almost everyone experiences some type of back pain at some point in time. The pain may occur suddenly and be gone within a couple of days or weeks, or it may occur repeatedly, never completely going away, and can have a major impact on your regular activities. Back pain can be caused for a variety of reasons including:

Lack of physical activity - loss of strength and flexibility of the muscles that support the back to do the tasks that need to be done on a daily basis.

Poor posture - in a job that requires a lot of sitting or bending over.

Emotional stress - when under stress, we carry continual muscle tension which, in turn, is attached to our joints and lumbar spine causing pain.

Trauma and injury - a car accident, bad slip or fall, recovering from surgery, etc.

Unsafe lifting techniques.

Genetic factors (or born with a spine abnormality) that puts one at additional risk.

Other causes may include pain coming from repetitive movement, simple aging where our bodies naturally start to experience deterioration or excess body weight which can put extra strain on your back.

Education in terms of back health is extremely important. Proper body mechanics ensure your back can remain strong for many years. You can do a lot of things for yourself to ensure a healthy back including:

Learn how to lift properly - use your big leg muscles and not your back.

Don't stay in prolonged positions for long periods of time; move.

Maintain a good, healthy fitness level which helps maintain flexibility and core strength of the muscles that support the back.

Use correct tools for the specific job you are trying to accomplish.

Don't rush simply to get a job done but **plan what you are doing.**

As lawn and gardening season is in full swing, it is very important to keep back health in mind. Take the time to figure out ways to decrease the load on your back and you will be much happier for it. For example, use a lawnmower with adjustable handles so you are not stooped over to cut the grass. Purchase tools that will work best for you like a low stool or a cushion to kneel on for gardening. Ensure tools are sharp to decrease the amount of effort needed to use them. It is about knowing how to use what you have in a better manner to decrease the load and the work our backs have to do. The same principles apply to shoveling snow in the winter; be mindful.

In Sunrise Health Region, physiotherapists are available in several communities to provide an assessment and determine needs in relation to back pain. They can provide appropriate exercises as well as education on proper ergonomics with a focus on self-management. You can be referred by a doctor or self-refer meaning you can make an appointment to talk to a physiotherapist if you are having issues.

Take care and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle to get as much mileage out of your spine as you can; your back can not be replaced.