

5 Things You Didn't (Or Did) Know About Low Back Pain (LBP)

Scientific research in the area of back pain has progressed in recent times and it is challenging widespread beliefs held about the condition that seems to plague so many people.

1 Back Pain is common and normal 80% people will experience an episode of back pain during their lifetime. It can be like getting tired or becoming sad; we don't like it, but it occurs to almost everybody at some point. What isn't common, is not recovering from back pain.

Most acute (new) back pain has an EXCELLENT PROGNOSIS. ALMOST 85% OF PEOPLE ARE FULLY RECOVERED BY 3 MONTHS. Only a very small number of people develop long-standing, disabling problems.

2 Scans are rarely needed Consider getting a scan "just in case" there is something serious involved in their pain. However, all the evidence suggests scans only show something truly important in a TINY MINORITY (<5PC) of people with back pain.

A brief consultation with a healthcare professional would usually be able to identify if a scan was really needed based on a person's symptoms and medical history.

3 Interpreting scans should come with a health warning Scans often show up things that are poorly linked with pain. In fact, studies have shown that even PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE BACK PAIN HAVE THINGS LIKE BULGING DISCS, degenerated or black discs, herniated discs, and 'arthritic' changes visible.

Remember, these people do NOT have pain! Unfortunately, people with back pain are often told that these things indicate their back is damaged, and this can lead to further fear, distress and avoidance of activity. The fact is that many of these things reported on scans are more like baldness - an indication of ageing and genetics that do not have to be painful.

4 Back pain is NOT caused by something being out of place There is no evidence that back pain is caused by a bone or joint in the back being out of place, or your pelvis being out of alignment. For most people with back pain, scans do not show any evidence of discs, bones or joints being 'out of place'.

Of course, it is worth noting that many people feel better after undergoing treatments like manipulation. However, this improvement is due to SHORT-TERM REDUCTIONS IN PAIN, MUSCLE TONE/TENSION AND FEAR, NOT due to realigning of body structures.

5 Bed rest is NOT helpful VERY STRONG EVIDENCE says that KEEPING ACTIVE AND RETURNING TO ALL USUAL ACTIVITIES GRADUALLY, including work and hobbies, is important in aiding recovery.

PROLONGED BED REST IS UNHELPFUL - associated with higher levels of pain, greater disability, poorer recovery and longer absence from work. In fact, it appears that the longer a person stays in bed because of back pain, the worse the pain becomes.

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