

Acute Low Back Pain

The problem

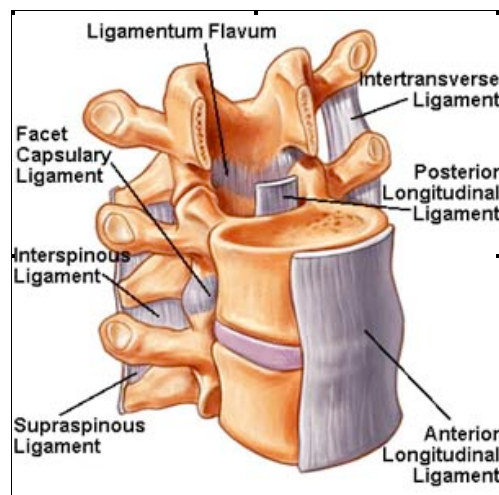
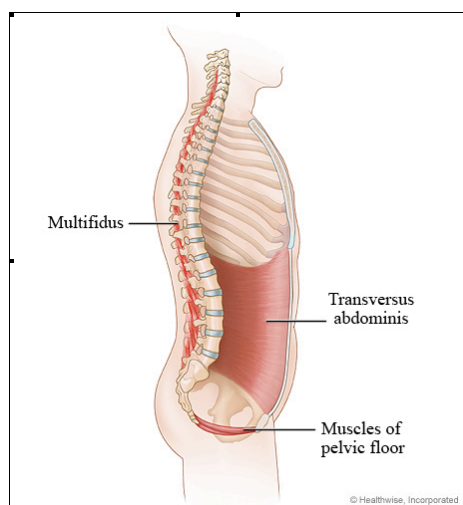
- Lower back and/or sciatic (leg) pain
- 'Acute' indicates onset within the last 6 weeks

Interesting facts

- 80% of Australians will have an episode of acute low back pain – you are not alone
- Acute low back pain may involve one or more structures around the spine such as the intervertebral disc, the facet joint the ligaments or the muscles
- Acute low back pain often affects people suffering with irritable bowel syndrome, continence issues and respiratory diseases
- Research shows that acute low back pain inhibits the stabilising muscles surrounding the spine (see below picture) leading to chronic weakness
- Stretching is only effective if you are targeting the right muscles. Too much stretching can actually make you more unstable in the long term
- A combination of strength and flexibility is vital for the long-term health of your spine

What you can expect/look out for

- You are very likely to improve significantly within one month
- You can expect slower improvements over the 3 months following
- It is not uncommon to suffer a repeat episode within 12 months



Hints for self management

- Keep moving, return to work if you can, even if you only perform light duties
- Do not be averse to taking medication as deemed necessary by your doctor.
- Stay calm, it is well known that anxiety increases the sensitivity of pain centres in your brain.

Management options

- Regular monitoring by your specialised physiotherapist can help to ensure that the interventions are tailored to your responses
- Increase your awareness of good postural habits

More information

- It has been proven through good quality Australian research that improving your posture and the strength and control of your anti-gravity muscles, will reduce the chance of future episodes of acute low back pain

References:

- Waddell, G **Clinical Guidelines for the Management of Acute Low Back Pain**, London: Royal College of General Practitioners, 1996
- BMJ. 2003 Aug 9;327(7410):323. **Acute low back pain: systematic review of its prognosis.** Pengel LH, Herbert RD, Maher CG, Refshauge KM.

Contact the team at Sydney Sports & Orthopaedic Physiotherapy to speak directly to a specialised physiotherapist
P. 9252 5770 or E. reception@ssop.com.au

This handout was prepared by **Sydney Sports and Orthopaedic Physiotherapy** and is intended as a general information service. Please note that the information provided is not intended as a substitute for advice from your healthcare professional. If symptoms persist, please consult your physiotherapist or doctor.