

## Ask the professional: Low Back Pain (LBP)

Given my chosen profession it's not surprising that a large number of people who seek out my services do so for low back pain (LBP). Also called lumbago, LBP is the most common reason why people seek out a health care professional, with an estimated 80% of the population experiencing LBP within their lifetime. Contrary to popular belief LBP is not generally a result of any single trauma, but rather a result from repetitive motion at the end range of spinal motion.<sup>1,2</sup> Injury to the low back is usually a result of a history of excessive loading forces on the spine which gradually but progressively reduces the ability of the backs tissues to resist injury.<sup>1</sup> Most low back injuries are not the result of a single exposure to a high-force load, but instead are due to cumulative trauma, from multiple lower force loads that alone typically do not result in injury. For example people who have to sit for a long period of their day or those who do the same motions over and over.<sup>2</sup> People who suffer from chronic, or long-standing LBP have decreased **strength** and **endurance** in the muscles that stabilize the spine compared to a 'normal' population (those who has never experience LBP). This muscular 'de-conditioning' has been positively linked with both causing LBP and also is a result of LPB.<sup>1</sup> So the question is...what can be done to 'normalize' the strength and endurance in people who are affected? Well the answer of course is rehabilitation! It has been found that back problems can be alleviated in a large part by improving muscular endurance, specifically the muscles that 'stabilize' the spine.<sup>1</sup> Although the answer is deceptively easy, putting the theory into practice can be more difficult for some people then others. It is necessary to do the proper exercises that will target the appropriate muscles, while ensuring that the risk of injury is minimal and making a lifelong commitment to keeping your back strong and healthy. One of the most common questions I'm asked is 'how long do I have to do these for?' and my answer is inevitably 'forever.' Unfortunately exercise cannot be 'banked' and must be done repeatedly in order to keep the muscles that stabilize our spine in top form and condition.

### References

- 1- McGill, S. (2002). Low Back Disorders: Human Kinetics
- 2- Liebenson, C. (2000). **What Is the Mechanism of Injury for the Low Back? How Is Low Back Injury Produced?** *Dynamic Chiropractic. Volume 18, Issue 09.*

For more information on low back pain the types of exercises that can help to strengthen the spinal stabilizers please contact

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