



Is Back Pain an Injury? What is the More Cost Effective Model?

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Low back pain (LBP) ranks as a leading cause of disability among Connecticut's adults. Despite increased attention to the problem over the past three decades, annual healthcare costs related to LBP continue to rise at rates exceeding inflation. Research has shown some cost-effective approaches for prevention of low back pain and LBP disability, and these approaches are available to you through Enfield Health & Wellness Center.

Acute vs. Chronic Model: It is commonly held that 90% of individuals suffering from non-emergent low back pain will feel better in 90 days. For this reason, many authors in the 1980's recommended that physicians withhold restorative treatment for two to three months when emergent causes could be ruled out. After three months, the low back pain becomes chronic, and restorative treatment can be considered. Authors base this approach on the understanding that low back pain results from an injury and that the body employs a natural capacity for self-healing.¹

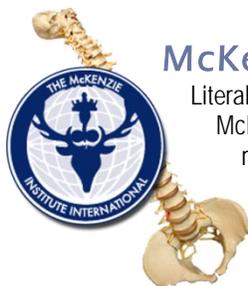
A Promising Alternative: One alternative model holds that many cases of acute low back pain can be considered injuries no more than one could consider a heart attack to be an injury. Instead, this model suggests that acute low back pain announces a disease process sometimes called "Deconditioning Syndrome."² Consider that patients often report LBP to begin with actions as innocuous as picking up a sheet of paper. The deconditioning model holds that many cases of acute low back pain result from repetitive, small insults to the structures of the low back over time. In the course of normal daily activities, these insults briefly overcome the body's capacity to heal and result in an episode of acute low back pain. The deconditioning model asserts that practitioners must address the factors leading up to the LBP event if future and possibly worse LBP events are to be avoided. The deconditioning model justifies exercise intervention during acute and subacute phases of LBP.



Minimize Healthcare Reutilization: Under the deconditioning model, the goal is not a singular report of pain free living as with the older acute-vs-chronic model. **The majority of healthcare costs associated with LBP can be credited to reuse of the healthcare system.**³ The deconditioning model bases success on significantly reducing reuse of the system. Several studies have shown professionally guided exercise to be successful at reducing pain, putting patients back to work, preventing future LBP, and/or minimizing reuse.³⁻¹⁰

Nelson, et al, studied 895 chronic low back pain patients treated in a physical therapy setting and found that reutilization rates among workers' compensation patients dropped by 67%.⁷ More and more studies are showing dynamic exercise programs to be effective at treating low back pain and reducing recurrences. Older studies that failed to show good results with exercise often focused on aerobic capacity and/or abdominal strengthening.¹¹⁻¹³ Among the modern studies that have shown positive results, common elements tend to be: extensor strength was improved, ROM was addressed, patients were encouraged to work through their pain, and rigorous exercise continued to failure.

With their scientifically based, proactive LBP protocol, you will find Enfield Health & Wellness Center to be well prepared to help all your chronic low back pain patients. When your cases of acute low back pain seem to fit the deconditioning model, please consider a referral to physical therapy during the acute or subacute phase as well.



McKenzie Certified Care

Literally hundreds of peer reviewed research papers now support the use of McKenzie Method. McKenzie Method is a therapy approach proven to produce faster, longer lasting, and less expensive results.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ This has been demonstrated repeatedly in journals such as *Spine*, the *Journal of Neurology*, *JMPT*, *Physiotherapy*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. McKenzie Certified care is one of the many therapy options available at Enfield Health & Wellness Center.

Please refer your patients to Enfield Health & Wellness Center

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