

Does exercise therapy help people suffering from low back pain?

Clinical Question	What is the effect of exercise treatment on pain and functional limitations in adults with chronic non-specific low back pain compared to no treatment, usual care, placebo and other conservative treatments?
Bottom Line	<p>This review found moderate evidence that exercise probably provides a small benefit for pain outcomes in treatment of chronic low pain compared to no treatment comparisons (including usual care and placebo). The observed treatment effect for functional limitations outcomes was small and was not considered clinically important. Types of exercise included were core strengthening, Pilates, general strengthening, and stretching.</p> <p>Exercise treatment was found to have improved pain and functional limitations outcomes compared to other conservative treatments. However, these effects are small and not considered clinically important. Conservative treatments consisted of physical and manual therapy, electrotherapy, and psychological therapy.</p>
Caveat	This review included numerous studies across geographic locations and settings. Most studies were conducted in healthcare settings where exercise treatments are often delivered, making this evidence applicable to clinical practice. However, fewer studies were available in community settings. Overall, there was moderate-quality evidence for the effectiveness of exercise treatment compared to no treatment, usual care or placebo, and low to moderate-quality evidence when compared to other conservative treatments.
Context	Low back pain has been the leading cause of disability globally for at least the past three decades and results in enormous direct healthcare and lost productivity costs. Many of the social and economic costs associated with low back pain are attributable to people who have prolonged disability – experiencing chronic and/or recurrent low back pain. Despite a large amount of research in the field, there remains uncertainty about the best treatment approach for this population.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Hayden JA, Ellis J, Ogilvie R, Malmivaara A, van Tulder MW. Exercise therapy for chronic low back pain. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2021, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD009790. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD009790.pub2. This review contains 249 trials with a total of 24,486 participants.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD009790.pub2/full>