

Mechanical Low Back Pain - Bombay Spine Clinic

- Mechanical Low Back Pain (Lumbago)

What Is It?

- Mechanical Low Back Pain, commonly known as Lumbago, is one of the most frequent causes of back pain. It refers to pain arising from the muscles, ligaments, joints, discs or other structures of the lower back without significant nerve compression or serious underlying disease.
- The pain is usually related to posture, daily activities, physical exertion or age-related wear and tear. While it can be quite uncomfortable, most cases improve with appropriate treatment, exercise and lifestyle modifications.
- Common Symptoms
- Patients may experience:
 - Pain in the lower back
 - Stiffness after prolonged sitting or resting
 - Difficulty bending forward or backward
 - Pain while getting up from bed or a chair
 - Muscle tightness or spasm
 - Pain after lifting heavy objects
 - Pain that worsens with prolonged standing or sitting
 - Reduced flexibility of the lower back
- Unlike sciatica, the pain usually remains localized to the back and does not typically radiate below the knee.

Causes & Risk Factors

- Mechanical low back pain may result from:
 - Poor posture
 - Prolonged sitting
 - Sedentary lifestyle
 - Weak core muscles
 - Repetitive bending activities
 - Improper lifting techniques
 - Obesity
 - Physical overexertion
 - Degenerative changes of the spine

- Occupational strain
- Risk factors include:
- Desk-based jobs
- Long-distance driving
- Lack of regular exercise
- Smoking
- Increasing age
- Previous episodes of back pain
- When Should You Seek Medical Advice?
- Medical evaluation is recommended if:
- Pain persists for more than 2–4 weeks

Symptoms are progressively worsening

- Pain interferes with work or daily activities
- Pain radiates into the leg
- Tingling or numbness develops
- Weakness occurs in the legs
- Pain is associated with fever, weight loss or night pain

Symptoms follow a significant injury or fall

- How Is It Diagnosed?
- Clinical Examination
- A detailed history and physical examination help identify the source of pain and rule out more serious conditions.
- X-Ray
- May be useful in evaluating spinal alignment, degeneration or fractures.
- MRI
- Recommended when symptoms persist, neurological symptoms develop or a slipped disc is suspected.
- CT Scan
- Occasionally required when detailed assessment of bony structures is needed.
- Blood Tests
- May be advised if infection, inflammatory disease or other systemic conditions are suspected.

Treatment Options

- Non-Surgical Treatment
- Most patients improve with conservative treatment.

Treatment may include:

- Activity modification
- Physiotherapy
- Core strengthening exercises
- Stretching exercises
- Posture correction
- Ergonomic advice
- Weight management
- Walking and regular physical activity
- Short-term medications when required
- Maintaining activity and avoiding prolonged bed rest are generally encouraged.
- Surgical Treatment
- Surgery is not required for uncomplicated mechanical low back pain.
- If investigations reveal conditions such as a slip disc, spinal instability, lumbar canal stenosis or nerve compression, specific treatment may be required based on the diagnosis.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is the difference between lumbago and a slip disc?
- Lumbago refers to mechanical low back pain arising from muscles, ligaments, joints or discs, whereas a slip disc involves displacement of disc material that may compress nearby nerves.
- 2. Is bed rest recommended?
- Prolonged bed rest is generally discouraged. Gentle activity and walking often aid recovery.
- 3. Can sitting for long hours cause back pain?
- Yes. Prolonged sitting, especially with poor posture, is a common cause of mechanical back pain.
- 4. Is physiotherapy helpful?
- Yes. Physiotherapy helps improve flexibility, strengthen supporting muscles and reduce recurrence.
- 5. When should I get an MRI?
- MRI is usually considered when symptoms persist, recur frequently or are associated with leg pain, numbness or weakness.
- 6. Can exercise worsen my pain?
- Appropriate exercises usually help recovery. However, incorrect exercises may aggravate symptoms and should be performed under guidance.
- 7. Can low back pain recur?
- Yes. Without addressing posture, ergonomics and muscle conditioning, recurrence is common.
- 8. Is walking good for low back pain?
- In most cases, regular walking is one of the safest and most beneficial activities.
- 9. Can obesity contribute to back pain?
- Yes. Excess body weight increases stress on the spine and may contribute to chronic back pain.
- 10. Does every patient with low back pain need surgery?

- No. The vast majority of patients improve without surgery.
- Related Conditions
- Back Sprain / Lumbar Strain
- Slip Disc
- Sciatica
- Lumbar Canal Stenosis
- Spondylolisthesis
- Sacroiliitis
- Osteoporosis
- When Should You Consult a Spine Specialist?
- If your back pain is persistent, recurrent, affecting your quality of life, or associated with leg symptoms, weakness or difficulty performing daily activities, a consultation with a spine specialist can help determine the underlying cause and guide appropriate treatment.
- Need Expert Advice?
- Book a consultation with Dr. Siddharth Katkade or upload your MRI/report for review through our Patient Resource Centre.

Need Clinical Evaluation or Second Opinion?

This educational document was prepared by **Dr. Siddharth Katkade**. For appointments or to share MRI scan reports for clinical review, call **+91 88507 73095** or consult at Byculla (E) / Khar (W) clinics.