



# Massage Therapy for Low Back Pain



## Lumbar pain

Low back pain is one of the most common musculoskeletal afflictions with a heavy societal cost in the Western world. Between 70% and 80% of all Canadians will experience low back pain in their lifetimes. The lower back where 58 % of all back pain occurs, whether acute or chronic, is called the lumbar region and includes five vertebrae (L1 to L5). The pain can be due to a number of factors - posture, strain, trauma, nervous system injury, a degenerative disc disease, etc. Back pain is the most common cause of workers' compensation. In Québec, 25.8% of all employment injuries and occupational diseases that were indemnified by the (CNESST (CSST) in 2014 were related to the back and spine.

Some pathologies associated with lumbar pain:

- lumbago
- herniated disc
- sciatica
- cruralgia
- ankylosing spondylitis
- osteoarthritis

## Common symptoms:

- Sudden acute pain with back muscle spasms;
- Pain that goes all the way down the back of one or both legs, and worsens when coughing, sneezing or straining;
- Pain getting worse at night may be caused by inflammation, a tumour or a diseased organ.

## Benefits of massage therapy\*

For low back pain due to some musculoskeletal disorder, massage therapy:

- › may reduce pain;
- › promotes muscle relaxation;
- › improves sleep quality.

Studies have show that massage therapy combined with flexibility and reinforcement exercises with the proper information provided to the patient is more effective than exercises alone on pain and function in the short and long term.

Massage therapy must be part of a functional rehabilitation program. Since there are many contraindications, you must consult your physician before undergoing massage therapy. The following techniques can be used to relieve low back pain:

- **Shiatsu:** This energetic massage uses accupressure with the thumbs, elbows and feet, focused on the meridians and energy points.
- **Masso-kinesitherapy:** This approach is a combination of massage therapy and mobilization techniques applied to improve movement. For people of all ages, from children to seniors who have lost some mobility.
- **Swedish:** This highly popular biomechanical technique using oil rehabilitates tired, atonic or inhibited muscles.
- **Trigger Points Massage:** This technique involves applying direct, focused pressure on painful muscular points (or knots) until the constricted areas are released, thus relieving the pain.
- **Deep Tissue Massage:** This is a traditional form of massage that uses slower firm strokes and pressure focused on the painful and tense areas.

References: Castonguay, P. et Bussière, P. Agents physiques, massage et tractions. In Bergeron, Fortin, Leclaire: *Pathologie médicale de l'appareil locomoteur*. Op. cit., ch. 39,p.1415.

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