



# 3 Common reasons for chronic lower back pain

3 COMMON REASONS FOR LOWER BACK PAIN  
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An astounding number of Britain's suffer from pain daily. According to data from a study from the NHS "Back pain behind 'more disability than any other condition'," ITV News reports after a new study found that the condition may now be the leading cause of disability worldwide. The study looked at how much disability is caused by lower back pain globally. It found that lower back pain caused more disability than any other condition, affecting nearly 1 in 10 people and becoming more common with increasing age.

The condition was most common in Western Europe, followed by North Africa and the Middle East, and was lowest in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The results of this research – which used data from a large study undertaken in 2010 on the global burden of disease – are likely to be reliable, and its findings will be of concern to health officials.

The study does a good job of highlighting a common but often overlooked condition. Lower back pain is not usually linked to any serious disease but can be debilitating and emotionally distressing. It can be triggered by bad posture while sitting or standing, bending awkwardly, or lifting incorrectly.

Treating back pain as a corrective exercise coach is something, I love to give advice on and help with yet ironically the number one advice from doctors is to perhaps swim, rest or take anti-inflammatories and pain killers. Pain killers have a whole host of implications and side effects number one of those is affecting the gut health.

Much of this pain is due to acute causes such as accidents or injuries. A sizable percentage, however, is not due to an acute reason. Many people suffer from chronic pain that lasts long after the initial injury has healed. Sometimes there was no injury at all. In my 10 years of experience as a coach, one of the most common types of pain I have seen is back pain that was NOT due to injury, or at least the initial

injury was years ago and yet the pain persists.

The majority of chronic pain I have seen in clients was the result of poor movement and muscle recruitment patterns. Either these patterns caused bad movement which set them up for injury, or these bad movement patterns caused wear and tear in the spine or inflammation in the muscles of the back which cause terrible daily or almost daily pain. The good news is that pain due to poor movement patterns can typically be fixed in relatively short periods when the right types of stretching and exercise are introduced and even through dietary changes.

A movement pattern is literally **HOW** your body moves when you do things. These patterns are learned through repetitious movement or lack of movement and ingrained as “default” patterns. An easy example is how we walk. You inevitably have an ingrained default walking pattern that you have developed throughout the years. For better or worse this is your pattern. Now think of the things you tend to do most throughout the day...maybe you sit a lot in traffic or at your desk...maybe you stand all day...maybe you activate some muscles repeatedly while others almost never get activated...basically **EVERYTHING** you do frequently throughout the day creates

patterns in your body. Many times, these patterns are less than ideal, and they result in joints that move poorly which results in inflammation and pain. The most common pain complaint I would get as a coach hands down was lower back pain. This is extremely common. Some experts estimate that as much as 80% of the population will suffer from back pain at some point in their lives. It's also one of the worst places to hurt.

When your back hurts you feel like you can't do anything at all. That's the bad news...now here is the good news... through my time of professional coaching I have identified 3 main common reasons why people have chronic back pain.

## REASON ONE

### Systemic Inflammation

How we eat greatly influences our overall health in many ways and one of them is how “inflamed” our bodies become. A diet that is high in “pro-inflammatory” foods tends to make susceptible joints and areas of the body hurt. Pro-inflammatory foods include those that people commonly have intolerances to. When you have a food intolerance this means your body has a low-level immune reaction to food. Symptoms may include digestive issues, skin issues, brain fog, and sleep issues just to name a few.

Because intolerances are an immune reaction your body increases its inflammatory markers to mount up a defence. This pro inflamed state makes everything feel stiffer and makes areas that are susceptible to pain hurt more. A list of common foods to avoid when you are trying to reduce systemic inflammation include gluten, dairy, eggs, corn, soy, processed sugar, alcohol and processed vegetable oils like canola and corn oil. Overeating can also increase systemic inflammation so try to eat less as well. I’m always surprised at how many people eliminate most of their pain from these dietary changes alone.



## REASON TWO

### “overactive hip flexors” and weak core muscles

In today’s society its incredibly common to see people with tight hip flexors.

This is likely because we sit for most of the day. In a seated position our hip flexors are shortened and due to the length of time, they stay in this shortened position they tend to get tight. Combine this with a lack of overall abdominal, oblique and inner core muscle strength and you have a recipe for back pain. If this is you, the solution is NOT to go do a bunch of sit-ups. If you do that all that will happen is, you will activate and use your hip flexors while your core muscles play second fiddle. This will only make the problem worse which is why sit-ups and crunches

tend to make back pain worse. Before working the core it's important to teach the body to “disengage” the hip flexors while activating the core muscles. I teach some easy stretches which you can find on my Instagram to help with this.



That's pretty much it. If you work on eating a low inflammatory diet, do the hip flexor deactivator exercise a few times a week and do the hip stretching movement several times a day you should see some reductions in pain. Keep in mind that everyone is different and, although the above advice will likely help most of you reading this, some of you may not gain any relief. In stubborn cases, a more individualised approach may be needed.

## REASON THREE

### Tight hips

Anytime someone comes to me with back pain I can almost always count on the fact that they will also have tight hips. They go hand in hand. Loosening up those hips allows the hip joints to move more freely so that the low back doesn't have to compensate so much. An easy way to do this is the seated leg crossover hip stretch which can be done almost anywhere. I recommend my clients do this stretch every 30 minutes that they are sitting at their desks and the results are almost always great.



Gareth was 21 years old when he touched his first weight and from that moment he was hooked. Growing up an artist major, asthmatic, skinny but a love of storytelling and creativity. Achieved a scholarship to school, and completed a Bachelor of Arts, fashion degree with two additional diplomas in advertising and digital photography. Halfway through working in fashion he started noticing imbalances in other people's bodies, which often made him think about the prevention of injuries as well as the injuries themselves. Loving the science of health and wellness, he wanted to find a career that enabled him to help a large number of people, a career that emphasized prevention and primary care rather than tertiary care, and would continually challenge and motivate him to improve. He saw weightlifting as a way to change his body and his self-image. In the beginning, he began reading muscle building publications, Arnold's Encyclopaedia of Bodybuilding, Mentzer's

Heavy Duty, Kubrick's Dinosaur Training, and every muscle magazine he could find, Weider's Muscle and Fitness, Flex, Iron Man. Each time he read about a new technique or methodology he would test it out in the gym. His passion for the art and science of resistance training was so consuming that he decided to make it his profession and become a holistic lifestyle coach and corrective exercise and kinesiology trainer and now on the road to becoming a chiropractor.