

Community Based Lower Back Pain Resources



Deanna Baker, PT
APC – Toronto

Ms. C is a 58-year-old female with recurrent back dominant pain that flares up from time to time. The pain is felt mainly in her low back, but when it is really bad she feels it “all over”. On exam there are no concerning findings or red flags. Outcome measures administered revealed a number of yellow flags and a high risk of chronicity. She is teary when describing her pain and says she has “no support”. You determine that she would benefit from some guidance on appropriate exercises, treatment, and psychosocial support for the way her pain is affecting her mood and daily function. However, she is on ODSP, her finances are very limited and she says she cannot afford to go for treatment. Many of your patients may relate to this scenario, as finding complimentary and appropriate free or low cost resources for managing their low back pain can be a challenge. Below are some resources and suggestions to help with scenarios such as this:

Supervised Back Pain Support and Management:

- CMCC (Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College) has clinics throughout the GTA, offering low cost evidence-based manual therapy and rehabilitation provided by students and supervised by experienced clinicians: <http://www.cmcc.ca/cliniclocations>
- Most CHCs (Community Health Centres) have programs geared to low income populations, which may include Chiropractic, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Massage Therapy, Acupuncture, group support, and counseling. Sometimes these services are provided by students and may not require an OHIP card. Some programs are also specifically geared towards First Nations patients or street involved persons.
- OHIP clinics provide funded physiotherapy for patients age 65 and over, under the age of 18, or anyone on ODSP. A written doctor’s referral is required. To find the OHIP clinics in your area go to: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/physio/pub_clinics.aspx

Counseling and support:

- Most FHTs, hospitals, and some community centres offer the Chronic Pain Self-Management Program. This is a 6-week peer support program, facilitated by a trained volunteer, focusing on goal setting and self-management skills.
- The Arthritis Society also offers the Chronic Pain Self-Management Program. Patients can choose a group format, or a free online course: <https://arthritis.ca/manage-arthritis/educational-resources-tools/online-arthritis-self-management-courses>
- Rehab centres may offer MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) for chronic pain. Bridgepoint in Toronto offers this program. A doctor’s referral is again required.

Exercise and Education:

- The Arthritis Society offers a Spine Osteoarthritis classes across the province: www.arthritis.ca. Patients can self-refer.
- The YMCA offers a gym program and aquafit classes for people with back and joint pain. There is a small fee to join.
- Community Centres are free or low cost. Most offer low impact exercise (yoga, stretching, back and core strengthening, aquafit) classes for people with back or joint pain issues. Look for seniors’ classes or “Arthritis Friendly” classes.
- Back Talk BC is an excellent online educational resource with interactive videos explaining back pain and self-management. It includes ergonomic advice as well as an easy-to-follow home exercise program: <http://worksafebcmedia.com/media/WebBooks/backtalk-worker/#/>