

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

Acute Back Pain: How OMT Can Help

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Acute back pain is a common condition that most people will experience at some point in their lives. Back pain is considered acute if it has been going on for fewer than four weeks. While there are many potential causes, most cases are due to muscle strain and unrelated to an underlying medical condition. A complete history and physical examination should be given to rule out any serious causes of back pain.

There are different approaches to the treatment of acute back pain, all with the goal of short-term symptom relief. Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) is one option that can be used alone or along with heat, ice, physical therapy and medication.

WHAT IS OMT?

OMT is a hands-on technique performed by a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) to diagnose and treat several conditions. OMT aims to restore normal structure and function, which encourages the body's natural ability to heal itself. Multiple techniques can be used depending on the condition being treated and OMT should not be painful.

HOW CAN OMT HELP WITH ACUTE BACK PAIN?

Myofascial Release OMT: Your physician will attempt to release both tight back muscles and the surrounding fascia with manual stretching and pressure.

Muscle Energy OMT: Your physician will position your back to apply a controlled force in a specific direction. You will be asked to counter that force in the opposite direction for 3–5 seconds, then relax, while your physician extends the stretch.

Counterstrain OMT: Your physician might find a tenderpoint for which they will move your body until that point becomes painless. That position is held for 90 or more seconds before your physician gently returns you to a neutral position. There can be multiple tenderpoints that are treated individually.

High-Velocity Low-Amplitude OMT: Your physician will focus on the spine's alignment with this technique that involves small, quick thrusts. You might experience a therapeutic pop during treatment, which should be painless.

WHERE CAN YOU GET OMT?

Locate a DO to obtain OMT. Use osteopathic.org to locate an osteopathic physician in your area.

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The PDF of this patient education handout is available for easy download and distribution to your patients at www.acofp.org/PEH.