

Who Should I See About My Back Pain?

Well, this is a tricky one. If you have any serious red flags then you may be referred to a doctor, orthopaedic or neurology specialist, or surgeon, depending on the problem. However, for the majority of people, conservative treatment will be sufficient to resolve their back pain problem. Therefore, trying conservative treatment first is usually advised, even if surgery may be required at a later date.

The most commonly visited medical professionals that deal with back pain are listed below in no specific order! Many people will advise or choose one over the other – this may be based on personal experience or preference, depending on relationships, accessibility, cost and insurance benefits. For some, it could be a process of trial and error until you find the best match for your needs.



OSTEOPATH

The philosophy behind osteopathy is that the ***"body is completely united; the person is a fully integrated being of body, mind and spirit. No single part of the body functions independently. Each separate part is interconnected with all others and serves to benefit the collective whole of the person. Alterations in any part of the system, including an individual's mental and spiritual health, affect the function of the body as a whole and all other parts therein."***

Osteopaths believe that the body is capable of self-regulation, self-healing and health maintenance. Osteopathy is a way of detecting, treating and preventing health problems by moving, stretching and massaging a person's muscles and joints.

Most people see an osteopath for help with back pain, neck pain, shoulder and elbow pain, arthritis, problems around the pelvis and hips and sports injuries.



PHYSIOTHERAPIST OR PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Physiotherapy helps to restore movement and function when someone is affected by injury, illness or disability. It can also help to reduce your risk of injury or illness in the future. Physiotherapy can improve your physical activity while helping you to prevent further injuries.

Physiotherapy can be helpful for people of all ages with a wide range of health conditions, including problems associated with:

- the bones, joints and soft tissue – such as back, neck, shoulder, knee hip pain, muscle strains and joint sprains and rehabilitation following surgery for example joint replacement;
- sports injuries;
- the brain or nervous system – following stroke, paralysis, multiple sclerosis (MS);
- the heart and circulation – such as rehabilitation after a heart attack; and
- the lungs and breathing – such as asthma, pneumonia, cystic fibrosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Physiotherapists consider the body as a whole, rather than just focusing on the individual aspects of an injury or illness.

Their treatment approach includes:

- advice and education;
- manual or hands-on therapy to relieve pain and stiffness and promote healing and movement; and



- tailored exercise therapy and rehabilitation to improve overall health, to strengthen specific parts of your body and improve mobility, function and independence.



BIOKINETICIST

This is a profession concerned with health promotion, the maintenance of physical abilities and

final phase rehabilitation, by means of scientifically based exercise therapy. You may be referred to a biokineticist after physiotherapy for further exercise therapy.

This kind of rehabilitation is applicable to people with chronic diseases, sports injuries and diseases of lifestyle – for example diabetes, hypertension, and being overweight. In addition, a biokineticist will promote health and wellness, seek to maintain a patient's physical abilities, and provide a specialised physical activity

programme. If you suffer from a chronic condition that can be improved or maintained by regular exercise, or if you wish to start on a new exercise regime and don't know where to safely begin – a biokineticist would give you the right guidance.



CHIROPRACTOR

A chiropractor aims to "aid the human body's own innate intelligence, which seeks balance, or homeostasis, among systems in the body." Chiropractic also emphasises that proper structure is necessary for proper function and holds that the nervous system is the primary coordinator of function throughout the body. Their treatment seeks to restore the communication flow with spinal adjustment.

The chiropractor delivers a force, usually with their hands, that the person's

body can use to correct the subluxation (mal-alignment), facilitating the body's natural ability to adapt, regulate and heal itself, through its own innate intelligence. This force is often called a manipulation – a short sharp thrust applied to a part of your body. They can relieve problems with bones, joints and muscle pain.



MASSAGE THERAPIST

Therapeutic massage can typically decrease pain and increase your range of motion. This hands-on therapy can mobilise soft tissues such as muscle, and increase blood flow to the area which promotes healing and reduces pain. Massage may also benefit you in reducing stress and anxiety, inducing relaxation and improving sleep. There are many different types of massages, and choosing a therapist may depend on your needs and personal preference.



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