

Lumbar Dysfunction Syndrome

Congratulations you have been diagnosed as having **lumbar dysfunction syndrome**. What is that you may ask? Well there are many types of low back problems and this is one. It presents with some common and predictable pain sites and problems.

This condition can cause pain in the lower back and/or into the buttock and legs. If a segment of the lumbar spine is not moving correctly, pain may result when the segment is asked to move more than it wants to.

This type of problem often comes about as a result of loading of the spine and then twisting either unexpectedly or beyond the normal movement being performed. A common cause is lifting something heavy and twisting at the same time, or an unexpected twist of the spine.

You may feel some pain at the time but it will often get worse as the day goes on, particularly if you continue lifting and twisting or perform repeated movement. After injury the joint may become stiff. Any movement that requires the joint to twist or bend more than it is able to, will cause pain.

The pain may be sharp at a particular point of bending or may be an ache as well if the problem is recent. Pain tends to be worse with standing and walking, and eased by sitting. You may find you have to stand slightly bent to decrease the jamming feeling. The morning is generally good with the pain increasing as the day goes on, depending on how much you are up standing and walking. On occasions you may be stiff in the morning if you have been lying in a position that stresses the affected joint too much. In general, the pain tends to be worse more with standing and twisting than sitting. Bending back often will be painful, which means that carrying objects in front of the body is hard as there is a tendency to lean back to counter the weight. On the other hand, bending will become tight and then the ability to twist is less. This will cause pain also. It may not be immediate but may come on after repeated activity in this position. The worse it is the more pain will radiate out and may even go into the legs.

You now have a back problem that you can affect by the activities you perform. You have a joint in the spine that will not move and pain is created when there is an attempt for normal movement

to occur. Rest in the form of eliminating the causative motion or position may ease the problem, or you may need specific manual therapy and stretches.

The best analogy for this problem is that you have a sprained ankle that becomes stiff. Every time you take a step forcing the foot to bend, it will hurt. The same is true for this type of lumbar spine problem. There may be pain bending back forward or twisting.

Your goal is to keep the aggravation of the joint to a minimum and at the same time stretch the joint to increase the pain free functional movement.

Sometimes the pain will go into the leg and there may be numbness or pins and needles felt. This is a sign of the nerves being affected as well. As things get better these should get less or get closer to the spine.

When you do the exercises they should not increase your leg pain or go further out into the leg. If they do then you are either pushing the exercises too much or moving in the wrong direction. Check with your clinician.

Your clinician will show you ways to do things differently during the day to minimize the stress on the joint. This will mean that the pain should decrease, but the first thing you will notice that improves is more movement.

The aim is to rest the joint by putting it in less stressful positions. As the problem settles down it will be important to stretch the joints that will heal tight to prevent the spine from becoming stiff and making it more likely to have a similar problem in the future.

Treatment will vary depending on the pain level, stage and severity of your problem. Between you and the clinician you will be able to manage this type of back problem well.