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Stride Forward: **OVERCOMING LOWER BACK AND LEG PAIN**



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Are you experiencing tightness or pain in your lower back and your leg (thigh, calf, knee or ankle)? Have you noticed changes in your stride? You're not alone. At Foundation Physiotherapy, our integrated team is dedicated to helping you.

Back pain can transform even a simple walk into a painful ordeal and can significantly impact the most ordinary daily activities. Identifying the root cause of back pain is essential to manage your pain and restore your function. More often, symptoms in your leg and your back are connected.

Understanding the Impact of Back Pain on Your Gait

Lower back pain can significantly affect someone's gait, leading to noticeable changes in walking. Here are some specific ways in which lower back pain can alter gait:

Altered Pace and Stride Length:

- **Reduced Speed:** Individuals with lower back pain often walk at a slower pace. This is usually a natural response to pain, as moving more slowly can sometimes lessen discomfort.
- **Shortened Stride Length:** People may take shorter steps due to the pain. This is often an instinctive effort to minimize movement in the lower back, which can be painful during longer strides.

Changes in Step Symmetry and Coordination:

- **Asymmetrical Gait:** There might be an uneven distribution of weight while walking. A person could favor one side to avoid pain, leading to an asymmetrical gait.
- **Altered Pelvic Movement:** The natural rotation of the pelvis during walking might be reduced. Typically, the pelvis rotates slightly with each step, but back pain can restrict this movement, making the gait appear stiffer.

Postural Changes:

- **Forward Leaning:** Some individuals might lean forward slightly when walking to reduce strain on the lower back. This forward posture can change the center of gravity and impact overall gait.
- **Reduced Trunk Mobility:** The range of motion in the trunk or upper body may decrease. People often stiffen their upper body to reduce motion transfer to the lower back.



Guarding and Compensatory Mechanisms:

- **Muscle Guarding:** This reflexive action where the back muscles tighten up or spasm to protect the spine from further injury or pain. While this is a protective mechanism, it can make the movement more rigid and painful. This may be why hamstrings and calf muscles also become stiff.
- **Compensations:** To avoid pain in the lower back, individuals might overuse their legs or arms while walking, leading to an altered gait pattern and symptoms in the lower extremities.

These changes in gait are often subconscious attempts to minimize discomfort and avoid movements that exacerbate lower back pain. It's important to note that these adaptations, while temporarily relieving, can lead to additional strain on other body parts and might contribute to secondary issues if not appropriately addressed.

The Role of Our Multidisciplinary Team

When back pain affects your mobility, it's crucial to seek help. Our diverse team is skilled in addressing musculoskeletal issues like back pain and altered gait patterns related to the pain. We provide a holistic assessment and treatment, considering the pain and its impact on your mental, emotional, and physical well-being with the following approaches:

- **Physiotherapists:** Physiotherapists are experts in movement and function. They focus on reducing pain and stiffness, improving mobility, and strengthening the back muscles for back pain. They use various techniques, including exercises, manual therapy, gait training, and education on proper posture and body mechanics to prevent future back issues.
- **Chiropractors:** Chiropractors specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of the spine. For back pain, they primarily

use spinal manipulation or adjustments to alleviate pain, improve spinal function, and promote natural healing. They may also offer exercises to address gait abnormalities and support spinal health.

- **Massage Therapists:** Massage therapists use manual techniques to reduce muscle tension and spasms, increase blood flow to the affected area, and promote relaxation.
- **Psychologists:** Psychologists can play a crucial role in managing back pain's mental and emotional aspects. They help patients develop strategies to cope with pain, address any anxiety or depression related to their condition, and assist in the modification of behaviors that might exacerbate pain.
- **Naturopaths:** Naturopathy focuses on holistic healing. For back pain, naturopaths may use a combination of natural therapies like herbal medicine, nutritional counseling, and lifestyle advice to reduce inflammation, promote healing, and improve overall health.

Our collaborative approach provides the most comprehensive care for our patients.

Contact Foundation Physiotherapy Today and Rediscover Your Stride!

If severe back pain has changed your walk, consult our multidisciplinary team. We offer customized solutions and a holistic recovery path!



Sources: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3048239/>; https://journals.lww.com/spinejournal/abstract/1993/09010/gait_analysis_of_patients_with_low_back_pain.8.aspx; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8396934/>; <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/scitranslmed.abj9954>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8347914/>

WHY FOUNDATION?

All of our team members are trained in our **three pillars of treatment:**

1) Education & Empowerment

There is often lots of misinformation, complexity and fear around pain and injury. Everyone experiences symptoms differently. The most important part of getting better is knowing what's going on, how long it will take, and the mindset towards recovery.

2) Manual Therapy

Manual therapy comes in many forms, from joint mobilizations to adjustments, to soft tissue release to facilitation of movement... manual therapy builds trust and is often effective in helping clients start the process of feeling and moving better.

3) Exercise Prescription and Progression

Exercise is the motor to living better! During your first few sessions, you will be provided with exercises or simple movements that will help you feel better. As you become more confident, exercises can be progressed to build strength and prevent further injury or irritation.

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

"Tina helped me a lot with my leg and back pain / tightness. She was very knowledgeable and provided lots of effective options for treatment. I've recommended her to several friends already and will continue to do so!"

— *Mitch C.*

Let Us Help You Get Back to Doing the Things You Love!



[foundationphysio.com](https://www.foundationphysio.com)

COME BACK TO FOUNDATION

OUR 2023 HIGHLIGHTS!

Thank you for supporting our business and trusting us with your health!

1 New Location!

Our clients loved us so much, they visited us an average of **8** sessions.

We celebrated **12** years of serving our communities.

14 New Staff members!

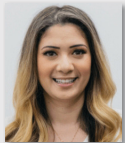
20 % of our new clients were referrals from our existing clients.
Thank you!

Our clinic schedules were more than **70** % booked!

3217 New clients!

MEET OUR CLINIC LEADS!

Alongside mentoring their staff, they are also here to assist you with any issues at your clinic!



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AT-HOME EXERCISE WALL ANGELS (aka W to V exercise)

This exercise is helpful if you sit a lot throughout your day.

Stand upright against a wall with the heels of your feet about 3-4 inches away. Bend your knees slightly and engage your core so your lower back and head are touching the wall. Next, bring your arms up and out to the side to make a “W” against the wall. Then slowly raise your arms up the wall until as high as comfortable, or until you make a “V” shape with your arms. Make sure your head, back, and shoulders are in contact with the wall throughout the exercise. Ideally keep both your elbows and wrists in contact with the wall as well. Hold for 5 seconds, 5-10 repetitions. Every 2 hours as a break from sitting!

