

The effectiveness of four interventions for the prevention of low back pain.

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The Effectiveness of Four Interventions for the Prevention of Low Back Pain

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JAMA. 1994;272(16):1286-1291. doi:10.1001/jama.1994.03520160070046

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Abstract

Objective. —Low back pain affects 60% to 80% of US adults at some time during their lives. This review evaluates the effectiveness of four strategies to prevent low back pain for asymptomatic individuals: back and aerobic exercises, education, mechanical supports (corsets), and risk factor modification.

Data Sources. —The MEDLINE database was searched for all relevant articles published in English between 1966 and 1993. Bibliographies of identified articles were searched to ensure that all pertinent articles had been gathered and back pain specialists reviewed our final bibliography for completeness.

Study Selection and Data Extraction. —A total of 190 articles were identified, and

the 64 that contained original data about preventing low back pain were reviewed. Studies were graded according to strength of study design.

Data Synthesis. –There is limited evidence based on randomized trials and epidemiological studies that exercises to strengthen back or abdominal muscles and to improve overall fitness can decrease the incidence and duration of low back pain episodes. There is minimal evidence to support the use of educational strategies to prevent low back pain and insufficient evidence to recommend about the use of mechanical supports. Although there is no evidence supporting risk factor modification for preventing low back pain (smoking cessation and weight loss), there are other reasons to recommend the interventions.

Conclusion. –There is limited evidence to recommend exercise to prevent low back pain in asymptomatic individuals, but there is insufficient evidence to recommend other prevention strategies. These conclusions should be viewed cautiously since they are primarily based on studies conducted in the workplace rather than in clinical settings.(*JAMA*. 1994;272:1286-1291)

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