

# Patient Education Materials for Acute and Chronic Low Back Pain in Primary Care: Do They Work, and Which Should You Use?

## Objective

To investigate if patient education materials improve outcomes for patients with low back pain and assess which materials are best for use in practice.

## Practice Points

1. There are misconceptions about low back pain that negatively impact the recovery of a patient.
2. Education is recommended by nearly all clinical practice guidelines to treat low back pain, however patients report rarely receiving it.
3. Education materials can support clinicians in providing clear and consistent information to patients to address these misconceptions.

## Methods (PI: B. Furlong)

1. A systematic review and meta-analysis to assess the effectiveness of patient education materials on patient and health system outcomes.
2. Development of an assessment tool to evaluate if patient education materials contain information that is relevant to patient- and clinician-identified information needs for low back pain.
3. A comprehensive assessment of patient education materials for understandability, actionability, quality, readability, coverage of information needs, accuracy, and comprehensiveness (Table 1) to determine which should be used in practice.

## Results

**Table 1: Patient Education Material Assessment Measures**

Measure	Description
<b>Understandability</b>	Can patients process/describe the information?
<b>Actionability</b>	Can patients carry out an action based on the information?
<b>Quality</b>	Is the information reliable and trustworthy?

**Table 1 continued**

<b>Readability</b>	Can patients easily read the information?
<b>Information need coverage</b>	Is the information related to what patients want to know more about?
<b>Accuracy</b>	Are the treatment recommendations accurate?
<b>Comprehensiveness</b>	Are enough treatments covered?

- There was variation across outcomes tested, but patient education materials appear to be generally more effective than usual care for improving some clinical (e.g., pain intensity), process (e.g., knowledge), and health system (e.g., physician visits) outcomes.
- The research team developed a novel checklist that was used to assess if patient education materials contained information about 21 patient- and clinician-identified information needs related to prognosis, diagnosis, treatment, causes, prevention, functional anatomy, activities of daily living, and pain neuroscience education.
- The team assessed 19 patient education materials and, though none were perfect, the highest scoring was <https://mybackpain.org.au/>.

## Conclusions

1. There is still work to be done in the field of patient education materials for low back pain, but they appear to be helpful for patients with low back pain.
2. The research team recommends using <https://mybackpain.org.au/> in practice.
3. For further reading on this subject, please see:
  - ◇ Furlong et al., (2022) <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0274527>
  - ◇ Furlong et al. (2024) <https://osf.io/62gkt/>
  - ◇ Furlong et al. (2024) <https://osf.io/vctdb/>