

Lumbar Facet Syndrome



Exploring the what, why and how with STRIVE Sport & Exercise Medicine



What is Lumbar Facet Syndrome?

The spine is made up of a number of bones called vertebrae. The vertebrae are connected through joints called facet joints. The facet joints help to provide stability and facilitate movement of the spine. Lumbar Facet Syndrome is a painful condition of the low back originating from the lumbar facets. It often produces symptoms of low back pain that can radiate down into the buttock and back of the thigh. The pain is usually worse with extension and rotation of the spine, and many patients complain of pain and/or stiffness in the morning.



Why did I get this?

There can be several reasons why Lumbar Facet Syndrome can occur, such as trauma, inflammatory conditions, or osteoarthritis. The most common cause of Lumbar Facet Syndrome is osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is a normal age-related loss of cartilage that occurs in all individuals as we age. For some, the progression of arthritis can result in pain, stiffness and loss of function. Factors that can make someone more likely to develop facet joint arthritis include obesity, family history, congenital defects, metabolic disorders, and repetitive overloading of the spine through work or sport.



How can I get better?

Treatment for Lumbar Facet Syndrome often involves a multidisciplinary approach. In most cases, complete rest is not the solution to back pain. A well-structured and consistent exercise program can be the first step to improving symptoms. Just like patients experiencing arthritis in the knee or hip, the goal is to strengthen the muscles supporting the affected facet joints. You can speak with your physician or therapist for additional treatments that may help manage your symptoms.

4 Exercises for you

Exercise: Side Plank
Goal: Stability



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1. Lie on your side with the knees bent to 90 degrees and the legs in line with the body.
 2. Make sure the elbow is directly under the shoulder as you support your upper body on your elbow.
 3. Engage your core. Maintain that activation while continuing to breathe normally.
 4. Lift your pelvis so your shoulder, hip and knee make a straight line and maintain this position.
 5. To make this more challenging, you can support yourself using your feet instead of your knees.
- Parameters:** Hold for 30 seconds on each side, repeat three times. Perform once per day, every day.

Exercise: Bird Dog
Goal: Stability



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1. Get on your hands and knees (four point position) with your knees directly under your hips and your hands directly under your shoulders.
 2. Your back is in a neutral position (slightly arched) and your chin must be tucked in.
 3. Engage your core, lift one arm, and the opposite leg without allowing the trunk or pelvis to move or rotate.
 4. Lower your leg and arm back to the floor and repeat with the other leg and the opposite arm.
- Parameters:** 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Perform once per day, every day.

Exercise: Child's Pose
Goal: Mobility



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1. Kneel on all fours, having your hands and knees shoulder distance apart.
 2. Slowly move your hips backward to get the buttocks to your heels, maintaining a straight back position.
 3. You should feel a stretch in your lower back.
- Parameters:** Hold for 60 seconds, repeating 3 times. Perform once per day, every day.