

**Common causes of low back pain, adapted from Cohen et al<sup>6</sup>**

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**Mechanical (80-90%)**

- Unknown cause - often attributed to muscle strain or ligamentous injury (65-70%)
- Degenerative disc or joint disease
- Vertebral fracture
- Congenital deformity (e.g. scoliosis, kyphosis)
- Spondylolysis and spondylolisthesis
- Failed back surgery syndrome (e.g. arachnoiditis, epidural adhesions); may cause mechanical or neurogenic back pain

**Neurogenic (5-15%)**

- Disc herniation
- Spinal stenosis
- Osteophytic nerve root compression
- Annular fissure with chemical irritation of nerve root
- Failed back surgery syndrome (e.g. arachnoiditis, epidural adhesions); may cause mechanical or neurogenic back pain
- Infection (e.g. herpes zoster)

**Non-mechanical spinal conditions (1-2%)**

- Inflammatory (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, spondyloarthropathies, such as ankylosing spondylitis)
- Paget's disease
- Neoplastic disease
- Infection (e.g. osteomyelitis, discitis)
- Other (e.g. Scheuermann's disease, Bastrup's disease)

**Referred visceral pain (1-2%)**

- Gastrointestinal disease (e.g. inflammatory bowel disease, pancreatitis)
- Renal disease (e.g. nephrolithiasis, pyelonephritis)
- Vascular disease (e.g. abdominal aortic aneurysm)

**Other (2-4%)**

- Fibromyalgia
- Somatoform disorders
- Malingering