

# Physical conditioning as part of a return to work strategy to reduce sickness absence for workers with back pain (2013)

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The best evidence in back and neck pain care

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## Overview of the study

### Objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of physical conditioning as part of a return to work strategy in reducing time lost from work and improving work status for workers with back pain.

### Methods

- Evidence current up to 20 March 2012
- Participants: Adults (aged 16 or older) with work disability related to back pain who took part in physical conditioning programmes
- Intervention: Physical conditioning programmes\*
- Outcomes measured: Work status outcomes including time between intervention and return-to-work, return-to-work status in terms of 'at work' and 'off work', and time on light or modified duties

\* Work conditioning or hardening, or functional restoration and exercise programmes including advice about exercises

## Results & Conclusion

- 41 articles reporting on 25 trials (4404 participants) included.

Treatment	Evidence	Quality of evidence
Light and intense physical conditioning programmes	Little or no difference in sickness absence duration for acute back pain compared with care as usual (at three to 12 months follow-up)	Low
Physical conditioning as part of integrated care management in addition to usual care	May have reduced sickness absence days for chronic back pain compared to usual care at 12 months follow-up	Low

⇒ The effectiveness of physical conditioning as part of a return to work strategy in reducing sick leave for workers with back pain, compared to usual care or exercise therapy, remains uncertain