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THE EFFECT OF EXCESS BODY WEIGHT ON SPINE PAIN

A high body mass index (BMI) causes excessive strain on the spine.

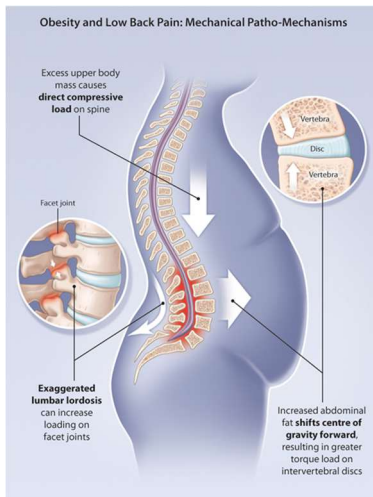
Increased body weight and abdominal size changes the normal alignment of the spine and **increases the mechanical loading** through the joints, discs and soft tissues.

These changes often cause **pain and inactivity**. The result can be difficulty managing the activities required for daily living, employment and leisure.

Any treatment for reducing back pain will have **limited benefit** while the cause of the pain is still present.

One of the most important steps in reducing back pain is **weight management**.

Our surgeons will discuss this with you in a compassionate and non-judgmental manner as part of their dedication to providing you with the best care possible.



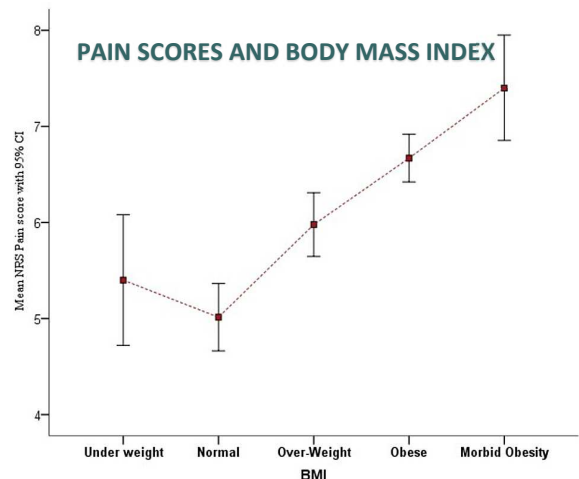
REDUCING WEIGHT

Achieving a healthier BMI is likely to **improve the symptoms of back pain**. Even a small weight loss may cause a noticeable improvement in your pain.

Weight loss also reduces the risk of diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, sleep apnea, heart disease, high cholesterol, stroke and some cancers.

The recommended methods to lose weight include a **healthy diet and regular exercise** although additional strategies including medication and/or surgery may be required.

There are many **health professionals and community programmes** available to assist in weight management, including doctors, dietitians, exercise physiologists, physiotherapists, psychologists/counsellors, exercise groups and support groups.



RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

Discuss with your GP which approach to weight loss may be right for you and to obtain any referrals required. A **dietitian** assessment may be a good place to start.

Our practice nurse can provide information on weight loss including goal setting and referrals to healthcare providers.

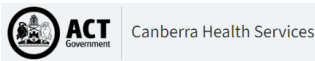
A physiotherapist can assist with exercise for weight loss and to strengthen the muscles that support the spine. Please speak to our staff to book an appointment.

ACT Health "Healthy Weight Programme" offers dietary assessment, advice and counselling. <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/services-and-clinics/services/community-care-nutrition-service>

NSW Health "Healthy Eating Active Living" offers information and coaching. <https://www.healthyliving.nsw.gov.au/be-healthier>

References:

Healthplexus.net (2023) Obesity, weight loss and low back pain: an overview for primary care providers
Siddiqui et al (2022) Association between low back pain and body mass index in Pakistani population: analysis of the software bank data

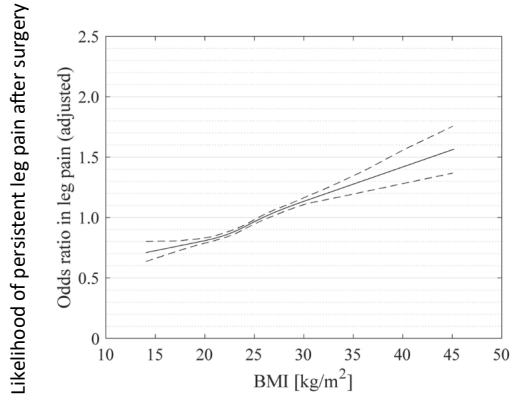


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THE EFFECT OF INCREASED BMI ON OUTCOMES OF SURGERY

Studies have shown that **pain outcomes** post-operatively are poorer in patients with increased BMI.

This includes both **immediate** pain reduction post-operatively as well as pain scores **2 years** after surgery.

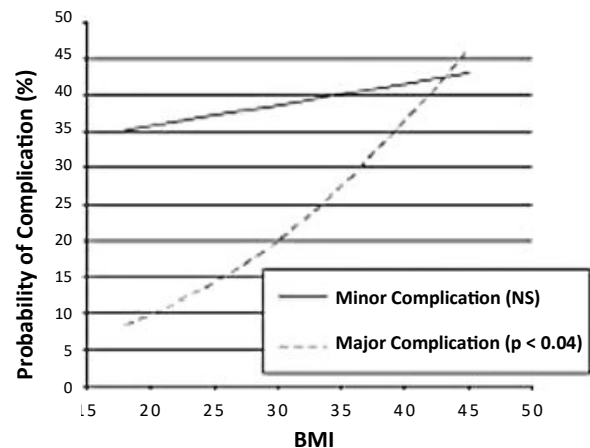
For this reason, amongst others, the rates of **subsequent and revision surgery** is also higher, increasing with BMI.

COMPLICATIONS AFTER SURGERY

Following surgery, patients with a BMI above the healthy range have higher rates of complications, including **deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolus**.

Superficial wound **infections** and increased **blood loss** requiring transfusion are also more common.

As BMI increases further, there are higher risks of more severe complications such as **kidney failure, deep surgical site infections, and sepsis**.



PREPARING FOR SURGERY

Book a **preoperative prehab appointment** with our nurse to identify any health issues and set some realistic and achievable health goals before and after surgery.

Aim to start your **weight loss** before surgery with the goal of continuing after surgery. Even a small weight loss may make your recovery easier.

Walk as regularly as possible, starting on flat ground then progressing to slopes, increasing your pace and distance over time. Aim to make this a daily ritual.

Practise some regular **functional strengthening exercises** provided by our nurse or a physiotherapist prior to surgery. This will improve your ability to move around early after surgery which enhances your recovery and helps to reduce complications after surgery.



References:

- Makajima et al (2023) Impact of body mass index on outcomes after lumbar spine surgery
- Patel et al. (2007). Obesity and spine surgery: relation to perioperative complications
- Ono et al. (2018). Body mass index predicts risk of complications in lumbar spine surgery based on surgical invasiveness
- Katsevan et al. (2020). Complexities of spine surgery in obese patient populations: A narrative review
- Flippin et al. (2017). Effect of body mass index on patient outcomes of surgical intervention for the lumbar spine

If you wish to discuss this information or need assistance from our staff please call us on (02) 6260 4680.