

**TEXT4myBACK:** A text message intervention to improve function  
in people with low back pain – September 2024

**FACTS:**

- LBP is the leading cause of disability world-wide, affecting the activity of 540 million people globally.
- Approximately one in six Australians report LBP at any one time, with 50% of the population reporting it in the past month.
- LBP accounts for approximately AUD\$4.8 billion in Australia every year in direct health care costs.

**PROJECT CYCLE:**

2020–2025

**PARTNERS:**

*The George Institute for Global Health, Australia*

*University of Sydney, Australia*

*Musculoskeletal Health Australia*

**SUPPORTERS:**

*National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia*

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

*Professor Manuela Ferreira*

**BACKGROUND:**

- Research findings show that treatments commonly offered to patients with low back pain (LBP) are not evidence-based and are potentially harmful (e.g. opioids or routine imaging).
- Treatments for LBP, such as medication and bed rest, are often associated with higher disability compared to active management strategies and do not help patients develop self-management skills for their condition.
- Reviews have shown that most self-management approaches for LBP fail to address key healthy lifestyle behaviours (i.e. weight control, physical activity participation, sleep quality), known to be associated with the risk of developing chronic musculoskeletal pain.
- The effectiveness of using text messages to educate and empower patients to self-manage their acute LBP through lifestyle-based interventions is currently unknown. The TEXT4myBACK study seeks to answer this important question.

**AIM:**

- To evaluate the effectiveness of a lifestyle-focused intervention delivered by mobile phone text message for adults with non-persistent (acute) LBP.
- A parallel cost-effectiveness analysis will be conducted to understand how the text message intervention may have reduced healthcare costs for participants.

**METHODS:**

- The intervention group will receive regular, semi-personalised text messages providing advice, motivation and information to improve physical activity, sleep, pain management and use of care.
- Participants will receive four text messages weekly for three months on randomly selected days and times of the day.
- The control group will receive a welcome message, reminders to complete the outcome surveys, and a single text message with a link to information on LBP and diet.

**IMPACT**

- Text message-based lifestyle and behavioural change programs offer several advantages, including ease of use and availability for patients.
- These programs have the potential to improve healthcare outcomes and be more affordable, leading to overall healthcare cost savings.

**CONTACT:**

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