



## What Injuries do rowers get?

The most common injury is Low Back Pain (LBP) + overuse injuries of the knee, forearm, upper back & chest.

## When is Low Back Pain an Injury? When should rowers STOP?

- When a rower has pain between the bottom of the ribs and the buttock crease +/- into the leg.
- If the pain is sharp and repetitive (not just a once off) when rowing or on the erg.
- When pain is getting increasingly worse when rowing or on the erg.
- When pain lasts >30min after rowing or an erg session.
- When it stops a rower from doing their planned training or they are rowing differently due to pain.

## Recommendations For The First 2 Days Post Injury

**UNLOAD** – The most important thing to do is rest the injured area. Avoid activities that increase pain in the low back. This is likely to be rowing, erg, sitting for longer than 20min, repetitive forward bending and loading the spine in the gym. Unloading the spine for the first 48hours is the best way to shorten recovery. DO NOT row through pain, this will prolong recovery but also changes the way you move and decreases performance.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO** – It is best to work out what you can do without increasing pain. Walking is a great way to keep moving, keep muscles around the back and hips relaxed and maintain base level fitness. Walk up hills to increase your heart rate but not down as the shock absorption can aggravate. If you can sit for >20min you can bike. Other good ways to keep moving and exercising are using an elliptical / cross trainer, stair climber or swimming.

**HEAT** – It is easy to get confused about using ice or heat. Ice is good for acute injury pain relief. Spine pain responds better to heat. Lie on your belly (a pillow under your hips will make you most comfortable), place a heat pack or hot water bottle over your low back region for 10-20min. This reduces muscle tension associated with pain.

**LET YOUR COACH KNOW** – There are studies that show that cultures that support early communication, immediate unload, early review by a Physiotherapist / Doctor that knows rowing well, result in less training time lost and earlier resolution of pain. Being tough and putting up with pain results in poor performance as muscles tighten in the presence of pain. Coaches MUST support rowers to stop rowing in the presence of pain to safeguard athletes in sport.

**Call the Physio, tell them you are a rower with low back pain that need to be seen as soon as you can** - This is the most important step so your injury can be properly assessed and managed. We can assess the severity of your low back pain. We can refer you to a Pharmacist, Doctor or Sports Doctor if you require any medication or specialist advice. You'll get an idea of how long the injury might take to get better and we will communicate and work with your coaches to start rehabilitation and cross training. Early referral = early management = early return to sport.

Taking simple pain relief such as paracetamol, reduces pain & therefore muscle tension: take as per packet instructions. Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) can help if you have inflammation, as assessment will determine this.

**This is a very general guide for the first 2 days after an injury. Please ensure you get assessed by a Physiotherapist with rowing specific knowledge early to ensure your injury is managed correctly.**