

# Smooth and integrated movement patterns can help individuals with back pain

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Many people with back pain do not know what is causing it and they do not receive effective treatment, but learning to move in a more integrated way makes a big difference, reveals research from the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

"People with long-term back [pain](#) often protect themselves by unconsciously limiting their movements," says physiotherapist Christina Schön-Ohlsson. "Such inefficient movement patterns gradually become habituated even though the original injury or strain is no longer present."

The answer to the problem is sensory motor learning, where [patients](#) are guided to find out how they are moving and how they can free themselves from self-imposed limitations. This process leads patients to develop their bodily awareness and to trust in their [bodily sensations](#) again.

In one of the studies 40 patients were randomly divided into two groups to compare experiences of two different types of treatment: [exercise therapy](#) and sensory motor learning.

"The patients in the sensory motor learning group said that they had learned to trust in themselves and now felt able to handle their low back pain themselves without seeking further medical help," says Schön-Ohlsson.

This contrasted with the patients in the exercise group, who expressed

insecurity and felt dependent on advice from back-pain experts.

The overall purpose of the thesis was to evaluate how sensory motor learning, which has its roots in the Feldenkrais method, affected patients with long-term back pain who had previously not been helped by any treatment. The patients' subjectively experienced positive physical and psychological changes coincided with objectively assessed improvements in movement capacity.

Schön-Ohlsson draws the conclusion that sensory motor learning helps patients to learn to listen to their body so that they can take care of their back problems themselves.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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