

# Catastrophizing can predict low back pain, disability

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Image courtesy of Blausen Medical

(HealthDay)—For patients treated for low back pain, catastrophizing may predict the degree of pain and disability, according to a review published in the Feb. 1 issue of *Spine*.

Maria M. Wertli, M.D., from the University of Zurich, and colleagues conducted a systematic literature review to examine the effect of catastrophizing on treatment efficacy and outcome in patients treated for [low back pain](#). Eleven studies, comprising 2,269 patients, were included in analyses.

Due to [heterogeneity](#) in study settings, treatments, outcomes, and patient populations, meta-analyses were impeded. The researchers found that catastrophizing at baseline predicted disability and pain at follow-up in four and two studies, respectively. In three studies there was no evidence

of a predictive effect for catastrophizing. In all five studies that assessed the impact of a decrease in catastrophizing during treatment, a moderating effect was found, with a greater decrease linked to better outcome. There was no effect seen in most studies that assessed the moderating effects on treatment efficacy, although most studies did not focus on a direct interaction between the treatment and catastrophizing thoughts. The influence of catastrophizing on work-related outcomes, including return to work, was not investigated in any of the studies.

"The presence of catastrophizing should be considered in [patients](#) with persisting back pain," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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