

No evidence supporting the use of antidepressants for non-specific low-back pain

Clinical question	How effective are antidepressants for patients with non-specific low-back pain?
Bottom line	There is no clear evidence that antidepressants are more effective than placebo in the management of patients with non-specific low-back pain, i.e. back pain where there is no identifiable cause. However, there is evidence that antidepressants are effective in other types of chronic pain, e.g. neuropathic pain.
Caveat	These findings do not imply that severely depressed patients with back pain should not be treated with antidepressants – they continue to play an important role in the treatment of clinical depression.
Context	Low-back pain is a common condition, affecting up to 80% of adults over their lifetime. It is usually benign and self-limiting, and generally resolves within 6 weeks, with or without treatment.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Urquart DM et al. Antidepressants for non-specific low-back pain. Cochrane Reviews 2007, Issue 4. Art No: CD001703. DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD001703.pub3. This review contains 10 trials involving 640 participants.
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