



Low back pain in home office workers: contributions of physiotherapy in prevention and management - a systematic literature review (2021–2026)

Low back pain in home office workers: contributions of physiotherapy in prevention and management - a systematic review of the literature (2021–2026)

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Summary

Low back pain is one of the most prevalent musculoskeletal disorders in the adult population, representing a significant cause of functional disability and impacting quality of life.

With the expansion of the work-from-home model, factors such as prolonged stays in

sitting posture, ergonomic inadequacies in the home environment, and reduced levels of physical activity can contribute to an increased occurrence of musculoskeletal symptoms.

In this context, physiotherapy plays a relevant role in the prevention and management of these conditions. The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of low back pain among home office workers, as well as to analyze the associated risk factors, the impacts on productivity and quality of life, and the physiotherapy intervention strategies described in the literature. This is a systematic review conducted according to the PRISMA protocol recommendations. The search was carried out in the MEDLINE (via PubMed), SciELO, LILACS, Cochrane Library, and CAPES Portal databases, considering studies published between 2021 and 2026.

Portuguese, English, and Spanish. After applying the eligibility criteria, six studies were included in the final analysis. The results showed a high incidence of low back pain among workers exposed to sedentary work routines, with prolonged sitting, ergonomic inadequacies, and low levels of physical activity identified as the main risk factors. Furthermore, low back pain was associated with functional limitations, reduced productivity, and impaired quality of life. The analyzed evidence indicates that physiotherapy interventions, such as therapeutic exercises, ergonomic guidance, and occupational health promotion programs, can contribute to reducing symptoms and improving worker functionality. It is concluded that low back pain represents a significant challenge in the context of remote work, and the implementation of preventive and therapeutic strategies based on physiotherapy is fundamental to promoting the health and quality of life of workers.

Keywords: low back pain; physiotherapy; home office; occupational health.

Abstract

Low back pain is one of the most prevalent musculoskeletal disorders among adults and represents a major cause of functional disability and reduced quality of life. With the expansion of remote work, factors such as prolonged sitting, inadequate ergonomics in the home environment, and reduced physical activity may contribute to an increased incidence of musculoskeletal symptoms. In this context, physiotherapy plays an important role in the prevention and management of these conditions.

The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of low back pain among home office workers and to analyze associated risk factors, impacts on productivity and quality of life, and physiotherapeutic intervention strategies described in the literature. This study is a systematic review conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The search was performed in the MEDLINE (via PubMed), SciELO, LILACS, Cochrane Library, and CAPES databases, considering studies published between 2021 and 2026 in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. After applying the eligibility criteria, six studies were included in the final analysis. The results indicated a high prevalence of low back pain among workers exposed to sedentary work routines. The main risk factors identified were prolonged sitting, inadequate ergonomic conditions, and low levels of physical activity. Furthermore, low back pain was associated with functional limitations, reduced productivity, and impaired quality of life. The

Evidence analyzed suggests that physiotherapeutic interventions, including therapeutic exercises, ergonomic guidance, and occupational health promotion programs, may help reduce symptoms and improve workers' functioning. It is concluded that low back pain represents an important challenge in the context of remote work, highlighting the need for preventive and therapeutic strategies based on physiotherapy to promote workers' health and quality of life.

Keywords: low back pain; physiotherapy; home office; occupational health.

1. Introduction

Lower back pain is considered one of the most prevalent musculoskeletal disorders in the population worldwide, establishing itself as a major cause of functional disability and impacting the Quality of life. It is estimated that around 80% of people will experience at least one episode of lower back pain throughout life, and about 20% of these individuals may develop into more serious conditions. chronic conditions (World Health Organization, 2023). Thus, lower back pain represents a relevant public health problem, with significant repercussions on health systems and in Occupational performance of individuals.

In the Brazilian context, the magnitude of this problem is also significant. It is estimated that Approximately 6 million Brazilians have lumbar disc herniation. Furthermore, data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security indicate that, among the five main reasons for granting benefits- Of the diseases reported in 2020, three were related to lumbar spine problems (IBGE, 2020). Data shows the significant impact of lumbar changes on functional capacity and The continued presence of individuals in their work activities.

Recent transformations in forms of work organization, with the expansion of the home-based work model. Offices have modified patterns of exposure to risk factors associated with disorders. musculoskeletal. The performance of work activities in a home environment occurs in Inadequate ergonomic conditions, associated with prolonged sitting, Continuous use of computers and reduced levels of physical activity. These factors can contribute to the development or worsening of lower back pain among workers who They operate within this work model.

In addition to physical impacts, lower back pain can compromise occupational performance and reduce productivity. productivity and affect the quality of life of workers. In this sense, understanding the Prevalence, risk factors, and consequences of low back pain among home office workers. This becomes essential for the development of prevention, health promotion, and... more effective therapeutic interventions.

Despite the growing number of individuals working remotely, gaps still exist. in the scientific literature regarding the systematization of evidence on the occurrence of lower back pain in this

specific occupational context. Therefore, systematic reviews that synthesize the findings are important. Available resources become relevant for broadening understanding of the topic and supporting care practices. most suitable.

Given this scenario, the overall objective of this research is to conduct a systematic literature review. to investigate the prevalence of lower back pain among workers in home office arrangements, in order to to understand its characteristics and impacts on this population.

As specific objectives, the aim is to: identify the prevalence of low back pain among Workers in home office based on studies available in the literature; analyze the factors of risks associated with the development of low back pain in this occupational context; assess the impacts Lower back pain impacts the productivity and quality of life of these professionals; explore interventions Effective therapeutic and preventive strategies to reduce the incidence and impact of low back pain. in this population.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Chronic Low Back Pain: associated factors, assessment and physiotherapy approaches

Musculoskeletal disorders, including lower back and neck pain, constitute one of the leading causes of disability in the Brazilian population, including among professionals who They perform their activities in a home office setting (Jerônimo, 2022). In this context, pain Lower back pain stands out as a prevalent condition in the general population, being considered the main cause of disability related to years lived with functional limitations (Oliveira et al., 2025). Chronic low back pain (CLBP) is a significant public health condition associated with reduced... from mobility, to compromised autonomy and a decrease in quality of life for affected individuals (Cruz; Lima, 2025). Furthermore, it is one of the conditions musculoskeletal disorders are more frequently encountered in clinical practice, representing a significant challenge for healthcare professionals due to its high prevalence and negative impacts on... Functionality and work capacity of patients (Rodrigues; Salviato; Loca, 2025). Several factors can contribute to the development and maintenance of lower back pain. Among them, Biomechanical changes, functional overload, and muscle imbalances stand out. The presence of significant overload in one of the limbs, for example, can generate compensations. Postural factors that favor the onset of chronic low back pain (Ferreira, 2022). Furthermore, risk factors present in the work environment, such as mechanical, physical, and chemical elements, Biological, ergonomic, and psychosocial factors can act cumulatively, increasing the... probability of developing musculoskeletal pathologies (Santos et al., 2024).

Workers who spend long periods of time in office environments, using Computers, as a work tool, are more susceptible to the development of these disorders. Prolonged sitting can overload the spine.

Vertebral strain throughout working hours, promoting the onset of pain and injuries. musculoskeletal. These discomforts can compromise an individual's functional capacity, interfering with the performance of work activities and contributing to reduced productivity, the increase in absenteeism and the higher occurrence of medical leave (Hirindza; Duarte, 2022).

Lower back pain can have different etiologies, including myofascial pain and joint dysfunction, facet joint disorders, sacroiliac joint abnormalities, discogenic pain, spinal stenosis, and in some cases, post-lumbar surgery syndrome (Oliveira et al., 2023). Given this etiological diversity, it becomes A thorough physiotherapy assessment is essential.

The physiotherapy assessment begins with a detailed anamnesis, which includes information Sociodemographic factors, such as age, sex, education level, housing conditions, health status, and access. to health services, in addition to data related to the patient's occupation and functional needs.

Pain assessment can be performed using standardized instruments, such as the Visual Analogue Scale. Analogue Scale for Pain (VAS), which allows for the quantification of pain intensity. Other factors are also being investigated. functional limitations in activities of daily living, such as walking, climbing stairs, carrying objects and perform work tasks. In addition, specific orthopedic tests can aid in diagnosis.

Clinical assessment. In cases of suspected low back pain with radiation, the Lasègue and [other specific tests] are highlighted. Bragard, used to assess nerve root compression (Silva; Sousa; Fortaleza, 2025).

In this scenario, physiotherapy has established itself as one of the main non-surgical strategies.

Pharmacological interventions in the management of chronic low back pain. Physiotherapeutic interventions include Therapeutic exercises, Pilates, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, and manual therapy techniques, with the The goal is to reduce pain, improve function, and restore mobility in patients. In addition to that...

Traditional approaches have been gaining traction with new strategies based on the biopsychosocial model.

A highlight, such as Cognitive-Functional Therapy.

Technological advancements have expanded therapeutic possibilities through resources such as Telerehabilitation, *biofeedback*, and motion sensors contribute to the monitoring of therapeutic progress and increased adherence to treatment (Cruz; Lima, 2025).

3 Methodology

This is a systematic literature review, the objective of which is to synthesize the best evidence. scientific methods available through systematic, explicit, and reproducible methods for

Identification, selection, critical appraisal, and analysis of the included studies. To ensure transparency, Regarding methodological quality and standardization of the report, this review will be conducted in accordance with the... recommendations from the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA), as described in Appendix A. The PRISMA protocol consists of 27 items and a flowchart of four stages (identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion), being used to guide the preparation and presentation of systematic reviews (Moher et al., 2009).

3.1 Research strategy and guiding question

The research question was structured based on the PECOS strategy (Population, Exposure, Comparison, Outcome and type of study), aiming to define the eligibility criteria and guide The search in literature.

Table 1 – PECOS Strategy

Acronym	Definition	Description
P	Population of workers in home office	
AND	Presentation: Presence of lower back pain	
W	Comparison not applicable	
THE	Outcomes	Prevalence of low back pain, risk factors, impacts on productivity and quality of life, and effectiveness of therapeutic and preventive interventions.
S	Type of study	Observational studies, clinical trials, and systematic reviews

Source: compiled by the author.

3.2 Eligibility criteria

The studies will be selected according to the following criteria:

Table 2 – Inclusion criteria

Criterion	Description
Participants	Studies that include workers in home office arrangements.
Study design:	Observational studies, clinical trials, and systematic reviews.
Exhibition	Presence of lower back pain
Comparison	Not applicable
Primary outcome	Prevalence of low back pain
Secondary outcomes	Risk factors, impacts on productivity and quality of life, and therapeutic interventions.

Source: compiled by the author.

Studies that do not address workers in home office settings or that do not present data will be excluded. regarding lower back pain or that do not meet the established methodological criteria.

3.3 Search strategy

The search will be conducted in the following databases: MEDLINE (PubMed), Scientific Electronic Library Online.

(SciELO), Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), LILACS and CAPES Portal.

Studies published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish between 2021 and 2026 will be considered.

Search strategies will be developed using both controlled and uncontrolled descriptors.

using Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS),

combined with Boolean operators (AND, OR). Among the main terms used, the following stand out:

The following are terms used: "low back pain", "home office", "telework", "remote work", and "ergonomics". A [study/test/etc.] will be conducted.

Manually searching the reference lists of the included studies to identify publications.

relevant data not retrieved from electronic databases.

3.4 Selection of studies

The selection of studies will be carried out in two stages: the titles and abstracts will be read to determine which studies are excluded.

Studies that do not meet the eligibility criteria will then be excluded. The relevant articles will then be selected.

analyzed in full. The selection process will be presented through a flowchart, as follows.

the PRISMA model, containing the steps of identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion, as well as

The reasons for exclusion from the studies.

3.5 Data extraction and analysis

Relevant information will be extracted from the included studies, such as sample characteristics (age, sex), geographic location, type of study, pain assessment instruments, main findings,

Risk factors identified and their impacts on functionality and quality of life.

The risk of bias of the included studies will also be assessed, considering the criteria.

Methodological approaches appropriate to each type of study. The data will be analyzed descriptively.

allowing for the synthesis of evidence on the prevalence of low back pain, associated factors, and the impacts on workers in home office.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The search in the MEDLINE (via PubMed) and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) databases

LILACS, Cochrane Library and Portal CAPES resulted in the identification of 72 relevant studies.

related to lower back pain and musculoskeletal disorders associated with the work environment.

After removing 18 duplicate records, 54 studies remained for title and abstract analysis. At this stage, 36 studies were excluded because they did not address workers in home office or because they treat lower back pain in a general way, without any relation to the occupational context being investigated. Eight articles were fully evaluated, of which 12 were excluded for not meeting the criteria established eligibility, due to the absence of data on prevalence, risk factors or Functional impacts of low back pain in workers who work remotely. At the end of the selection process, 6 studies were included in the systematic review for analysis qualitative. The study selection process followed the recommendations of the PRISMA protocol encompassing the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

• **Characterization of the included studies**

The selected studies presented different methodological designs, including reviews, systematics, observational studies, cross-sectional studies, and experience reports related to Physiotherapeutic intervention in pain management. Most of the studies were conducted in Brazil, focusing on workers who use computers as their primary work tool, and they operate in administrative environments or remotely. The main instruments used for assessing low back pain included the Visual Analogue Scale. Analogue Scale for Pain (VAS), musculoskeletal symptom questionnaires, and ergonomic assessments related to workplace conditions. The general characteristics of the included studies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Characterization of the studies included in the review

Author/Year	Country	Type of study	Sample	Assessment instruments	Key results
Jerônimo et al. (2022)	Brazil	Systematic review protocol	Office workers	Assessment of musculoskeletal pain and health promotion interventions	A high incidence of musculoskeletal pain associated with a sedentary work environment was identified.
Hirindza & Duarte (2022)	Portugal	Study transversal	Office workers	musculoskeletal disorders was observed according to the Nordic Musculoskeletal Disorders Prevalence Questionnaire.	High prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders was observed according to the Nordic Musculoskeletal Disorders Prevalence associated with inadequate ergonomic factors.
Cross & Lima (2025)	Brazil	Integrative review	Elderly people with back interventions	Assessment of pain undergoing physiotherapy	It demonstrated the effectiveness of therapeutic exercises, manual therapy, and biopsychosocial approaches in managing lower back pain.

Author/Year	Country	Type of study	Sample	Assessment instruments	Key results
Rodrigues, S. & Loca (2025)	Brazil	Literature review	Adults with chronic pain	Analysis of integrative therapies	It highlighted the benefits of multidisciplinary approaches in the management of chronic low back pain.
Santos et al. (2024)	Brazil	Systematic review	Healthcare professionals	Analysis of occupational health surveillance actions	It identified occupational factors associated with the development of musculoskeletal disorders.
Oliveira et al. (2025)	Brazil	Observational study	Primary care dentists	Functional assessment and disability analysis	An association was found between low back pain and functional limitations in occupational performance.

Source: Prepared by the author.

• Prevalence of lower back pain in workers

The studies analyzed demonstrated that lower back pain has a high prevalence among Workers who engage in sedentary activities or use computers for extended periods. Literature indicates that workers exposed to occupational environments characterized by postures Prolonged and repetitive movements present a greater risk of developing disorders. musculoskeletal disorders (Hirindza; Duarte, 2022). Furthermore, national epidemiological data indicate that changes related to the lumbar spine These are among the leading causes of work disability and absences from work in Brazil. (IBGE, 2020; DATASUS, 2023).

• Associated risk factors

Among the main factors associated with the development of lower back pain, the following stand out: prolonged stay prolonged sitting, inadequate ergonomics in the work environment, and reduced... Levels of physical activity. Studies also indicate that biomechanical and organizational factors play a role. They can act cumulatively, increasing the likelihood of disorders arising. musculoskeletal disorders in workers exposed to sedentary work routines (Santos et al., 2024).

• Impacts on productivity and quality of life

The presence of lower back pain has been associated with significant impacts on the functional capacity of workers, potentially compromising professional performance and reducing productivity. According to Oliveira et al. (2025) found that individuals with chronic low back pain report functional limitations in



impaired performance of their occupational activities, as well as difficulties in carrying out activities of daily living. daily. These results reinforce the importance of implementing strategies aimed at promotion. from occupational health to the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders.

• Therapeutic interventions and preventive strategies

The evidence analyzed indicates that physiotherapy interventions play a relevant role. in the management of low back pain. Among the main approaches described in the literature, the following stand out. therapeutic exercise programs, manual therapy techniques, ergonomic interventions and multidisciplinary strategies aimed at promoting health (Cruz; Lima, 2025; Rodrigues; Salviato; Loca, 2025). In addition, educational initiatives focused on ergonomics and regular breaks throughout the workday are important. Encouraging physical activity was also cited as an effective measure for... To reduce the incidence and impact of lower back pain among workers.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this systematic review show that low back pain represents a problem. relevant among workers who perform their activities in a home office setting, in contexts Occupational conditions characterized by long periods of sedentary work and the continuous use of computers. The analysis of the included studies demonstrated that ergonomic and organizational factors Behavioral factors contribute significantly to the development of disorders. musculoskeletal disorders in this population group. The high incidence of lower back pain identified in the analyzed studies is consistent with evidence from the literature points to it as one of the main causes of functional disability in economically active adults (Oliveira et al., 2023). In addition, national epidemiological data They indicate that changes related to the lumbar spine are among the main reasons for work absences and granting of disability benefits in Brazil (IBGE, 2020; (DATASUS, 2023). These findings reinforce the relevance of the topic in the field of occupational health. Among the main risk factors identified in the included studies, the following stand out: permanence prolonged sitting, inadequate ergonomics in the work environment, and reduced practice of physical activity. According to Hirindza and Duarte (2022), workers exposed to Inadequate ergonomic conditions increase the likelihood of developing disorders. musculoskeletal muscles when maintaining static postures for extended periods.



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In addition to biomechanical factors, the literature also highlights the influence of organizational aspects and psychosocial factors in the development of low back pain. Studies indicate that increased load of work, the intensification of professional demands, and the difficulty of establishing boundaries between Personal and professional life in the context of remote work can contribute to the worsening of musculoskeletal symptoms (Santos et al., 2024).

Another relevant aspect observed in the results of this review refers to the impacts of lower back pain. Regarding the functionality and occupational performance of workers. The presence of lower back pain. Chronic conditions can compromise an individual's functional capacity, interfering with both the performance of tasks and other functions. work tasks as well as the performance of daily life activities. As demonstrated by Oliveira et al. (2025), individuals with low back pain are more likely to develop limitations functional factors that affect your quality of life and productivity at work.

In this context, physiotherapy interventions emerge as important strategies in management of low back pain. The evidence analyzed in this review indicates that approaches based on Therapeutic exercises, manual therapy, and multidisciplinary strategies are showing results. positive in reducing pain and improving patient functionality (Cruz; Lima, 2025; Rodrigues; Salviato; Loca, 2025). These interventions are relevant in the context of remote work where the absence of adequate ergonomic guidance can favor the onset or worsening of of musculoskeletal disorders.

Furthermore, preventive strategies aimed at promoting occupational health demonstrate potential. To reduce the incidence of lower back pain among workers. Implementing regular breaks. during the workday, the ergonomic suitability of the home environment and encouragement of the practice Physical activity measures are cited in the literature as effective in preventing disorders. musculoskeletal (Jerônimo et al., 2022).

Despite the contributions of this review, some limitations should be considered. The number The limited number of specific studies on lower back pain among home office workers highlights a This is a significant gap in the scientific literature. Furthermore, there is methodological heterogeneity in the studies. Included, with different designs and instruments for pain assessment, it can make it difficult to... Direct comparison between the results.

Therefore, it becomes necessary to develop new research that investigates, in a more thorough way... In-depth analysis of the prevalence, risk factors, and impacts of low back pain among workers in In the context of remote work, studies with more robust methodological designs may be available. to contribute to expanding knowledge on the subject and to support the development of strategies for More effective prevention and intervention.



Final Considerations

This systematic review aimed to investigate the prevalence of low back pain among workers in home office arrangements, as well as analyzing the associated risk factors, the impacts on productivity and quality of life and possible intervention strategies and prevention methods described in the scientific literature.

The results showed that lower back pain is a problem among workers who perform work activities in a home environment, in contexts characterized by long periods of time spent outdoors. Periods spent sitting, continuous use of computers, and ergonomic inadequacies in the workspace. work-related factors contribute to the development of musculoskeletal disorders. which may compromise functionality, professional performance and quality of life of individuals. Furthermore, the studies analyzed demonstrated that lower back pain can impact the Work productivity, being associated with the presence of functional limitations and physical discomfort. persistent and increased risk of work absenteeism. In this sense, the adoption of strategies aimed at Promoting health is fundamental for the prevention and proper management of this condition. Among the main interventions identified in the literature, exercise programs stand out. therapeutic measures, ergonomic guidelines, regular breaks during the workday, and actions Educational strategies aimed at promoting healthy habits. These strategies demonstrate potential for to reduce painful symptoms, improve functionality, and promote greater well-being among workers who work remotely.

However, a limited number of specific studies on low back pain were observed in workers in home office, which highlights the need for further investigations that delve deeper into the subject. Understanding this topic. Future research may contribute to the development of more effective prevention and intervention protocols, as well as for the implementation of policies focused on promoting health in the context of remote work.

Therefore, it can be concluded that lower back pain constitutes a significant challenge for occupational health. contemporary issues, in light of recent transformations in forms of work organization. A Expanding scientific knowledge on the subject becomes essential to support practices of more effective care and promote better health conditions and quality of life for the workers integrated into the remote work model.

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