

Japanese Orthopaedic Association Back Pain Evaluation Questionnaire

The [Japanese Orthopaedic Association](#) (JOA) has developed a clinical symptom score for [lumbar disc herniation](#) and for [lumbar spinal canal stenosis](#) . This can help determine the degree of improvement following surgical intervention.

The score range –2 to 16.

Parameters in the score:

- (1) subjective symptoms (9 points): low back pain leg pain and/or tingling gait
- (2) clinical signs (6 points): straight-leg raising test sensory disturbance motor disturbance
- (3) restriction in activities (14 points): turn over while lying standing washing leaning forward sitting about 1 hour lifting or holding a heavy object walking
- (4) urinary bladder function (-6 points maximum)

Low back pain

none 3

occasional mild pain 2

frequent mild 1

occasional severe pain 1

frequent pain 0

continuous pain 0

Leg pain and/or tingling

none 3

occasional slight symptoms 2

frequent slight symptoms 1

occasional severe symptoms 1

frequent severe symptoms 0

continuous severe symptoms 0

Gait

normal 3 able to walk

500 meters or more although it results in pain tingling and/or muscle weakness 2

unable to walk > 500 meters owing to leg pain tingling and/or muscle weakness 1

unable to walk > 100 meters owing to leg pain tingling and/or muscle weakness 0

Straight leg raising (includes a tight hamstring)

normal (> 70°) 2

30 to 70° 1

< 30° 0

Sensory disturbance

none 2

slight disturbance (not subjective) 1

marked disturbance 0

Motor disturbance

normal (Grade 5) 2

slight weakness (Grade 4) 1

marked weakness (Grades 0 to 3) 0

Turn over while lying

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Standing

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Washing

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Leaning forward

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Sitting about 1 hour

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Lifting or holding a heavy object

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Walking

no restriction 2

moderate restriction 1

severe restriction 0

Urinary bladder function

normal 0

mild dysuria -3

severe dysuria -6

where: • I used dysfunction in the implementation for urinary bladder function.

total score = SUM(points for all parameters)

Interpretation:

- minimum score: -6
- maximum score: 29
- The higher the score the more normal the patient's overall status.

postoperative improvement in percent = $\frac{(\text{postoperative score}) - (\text{preoperative score})}{(29 - (\text{preoperative score}))} \times 100\%$ ^{1) 2)}.

¹⁾

Japanese Orthopaedic Association (JOA). Japanese Orthopaedic Association Assessment Criteria Guidelines Manual. 1996. paegs 46-49.

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Osawa T Ogura T et al. Evaluation of lumbosacral nerve root lesions using evoked potentials recorded by a surface electrode technique. Spine. 2003; 28: 496-501

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