

VIVA



FREE GUIDE

The 5-Minute Pain Pattern Self-Check

Five simple checks you can do at home to find where your persistent pain may really be starting.

ALIVE · PRESENT · ROOTED

Where it hurts is rarely where it starts

After 15 years of hands-on bodywork, this is the pattern I see most: the painful spot is often the area doing extra work for somewhere else.

A knee takes on load because the hip has stopped stabilizing. A neck stays tight because breathing has moved up into the chest. A shoulder pinches because the ribs and upper back have stiffened.

Your body is connected head to toe, through muscle, fascia and nerves. And your brain is always asking one question: am I safe? When it senses a problem, it adds tension and guarding to protect you. That protection is useful in the short term. Left alone for months, it becomes the pattern that keeps the pain coming back.

These five checks look at the systems I assess first: breathing, balance, your eyes and neck, the hip hinge, and the shoulders and ribs. They take about five minutes. You won't get a diagnosis from them. You will get a clearer picture of your own pattern.

How to do it

- Wear comfortable clothes. Bare feet are best.
- Have a wall nearby, and a mirror or your phone to film yourself.
- Go slowly. Notice, don't push. Check the boxes for anything you notice.
- Each checked box is one point. Add them up at the end.

Please read first

Stop any check that causes sharp pain, dizziness or numbness. This guide is for education, not medical advice. See your doctor first if you have had a recent injury or surgery, pain that wakes you at night, unexplained weight loss or fever, numbness or weakness that is getting worse, or any change in bladder or bowel control.

O1

Breathing

How you breathe sets the tone for your whole nervous system, and for the muscles of your neck and shoulders.



Do this

- 1 Sit tall or lie on your back. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly.
- 2 Breathe normally for five breaths. Don't change anything yet.
- 3 Notice which hand moves first, and which moves most.

Points: ____ / 3

Check if you notice

- ☐ My chest hand moves more than my belly hand
- ☐ My shoulders or neck lift as I breathe in
- ☐ I breathe through my mouth more often than my nose

O2

Balance

Your brain relies on balance information from your feet, eyes and inner ear. When that information is fuzzy, your body braces, often at the knee and hip.

Do this

- 1 Stand near a wall for safety. Lift one foot and balance for 20 seconds, eyes open.
- 2 If that felt steady, try 10 seconds with your eyes closed.
- 3 Repeat on the other leg.

Points: ____ / 3

Check if you notice

- ☐ I couldn't reach 20 seconds eyes open on one side
- ☐ Eyes closed, I wobbled a lot or put my foot down
- ☐ One side felt clearly harder than the other

03

Eyes and neck

Your eyes and your neck work as a team. Where your eyes go, your neck follows, and tension in one often shows up in the other.

Do this

- 1 Sit tall. Slowly turn your head to the right as far as it comfortably goes. Note a spot on the wall. Repeat to the left.
- 2 Now lead with your eyes: look as far right as you can first, then let your head follow. Repeat to the left.
- 3 Compare the two ways.

Points: ____ / 3

Check if you notice

- ☐ Turning one way is noticeably shorter or tighter
- ☐ Leading with my eyes changed how far I could turn
- ☐ Moving my eyes felt strained, jumpy or tiring

04

Hip hinge and squat

Your hips are built to carry load. When they don't, the knees and low back pick up the work.

Do this

- 1 Stand with feet hip-width apart, facing a mirror or your phone camera.
- 2 Slowly sit back as if onto a chair and stand up again, five times.
- 3 Then, hands on your hips, bend forward from the hips with soft knees, as if closing a car door with your backside.

Points: ____ / 3

Check if you notice

- ☐ My knees drift in toward each other as I sit or stand
- ☐ My heels lift, or I shift to one side
- ☐ Bending forward, I feel it mostly in my low back, not my hips and hamstrings

05

Shoulders and ribs

A shoulder only moves as well as the ribs and upper back underneath it.

Do this

- 1 Stand with your back against a wall: heels a few inches out, low back and head touching the wall.
- 2 With straight arms, slowly raise both arms forward and overhead, trying to touch the wall behind you.
- 3 Notice what the rest of your body does.

Points: ____ / 3

Check if you notice

- ☐ My arms couldn't reach the wall without bending my elbows
- ☐ My low back arched away from the wall or my ribs flared
- ☐ I felt pinching at the top of the shoulder, or one side was clearly tighter

YOUR SCORE

Add up your points

Total	What it suggests
0 to 3	Your basic patterns look solid. If you still have pain, it may be about load, recovery or one specific movement, which is worth looking at closely.
4 to 8	You have a clear compensation pattern. Your body has found a workaround, and it's likely part of why your pain keeps returning.
9 to 15	Several systems are working overtime. This is very common with long-term pain, and it's also the most rewarding pattern to work on, because small changes add up quickly.

Connect your checks to your pain

Look at where you hurt, then look at which checks you scored on. These are the links I see most often in my practice.

Where it hurts	Checks to look at	Why they connect
Knee	02 Balance, 04 Hip hinge	When the hip and foot don't stabilize, the knee is caught in the middle and absorbs the load.
Hip and low back	04 Hip hinge, 01 Breathing	If you bend from the back instead of the hips, and your deep core isn't working with your breath, the low back carries the strain.
Shoulder	05 Shoulders and ribs, 01 Breathing	Stiff ribs and upper back force the shoulder joint to make up the range.
Neck	03 Eyes and neck, 01 Breathing	Chest breathing recruits the neck muscles all day, and eye strain keeps them on guard.

If your checks lined up with your pain, that's good news. It means there's a pattern, and patterns can be retrained.



Want me to look at your pattern with you?

Book a free assessment. We'll go through your history and how you move, and I'll tell you honestly whether one of my programs is a good fit. In person or online.

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This guide is for education only and is not medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always check with your doctor about new or worsening pain. Individual results vary.