

Back Pain

With all those limbs to be picked up after the recent ice storm, back pain will affect many of us. In fact, the number one condition that plagues mankind is low back pain. Eighty-five percent of Americans have low back pain in their lifetime. Back pain is the second most common reason for visits to the doctor. Many back related injuries happen at work. However, there are things that can be done to lower your risks of getting back pain.

What Causes Back Pain?

Back pain can be caused by a wide range of problems. Some of the causes can be serious such as infection, tumors, or cancer. However, most of the time pain comes from less serious problems such as disc injury, sprained ligaments, strained muscles, facet problems, degenerative arthritis, or spinal subluxations (a pinched nerve in the back).

Sports injuries and car accidents can cause pain, but the majority of back injuries are caused by repetitive small loads, for example, bending over to sit in a chair or bending down to do yard work. Minor injuries usually heal within a few days. However, sometimes the problem is more severe and a longer recovery is necessary.

What kind of Back Pain do I have?

Back pain is usually classified in 2 categories, acute and chronic. Acute back pain is pain that has been present for less than 6 weeks. It is commonly a very sharp pain and usually felt in the low back around a specific spot, either the right side, the left side, or the center. This pain is usually constant, but can vary in intensity from extreme pain to a slight ache. Most of the time these patients have muscle spasms, radiating pain down the legs, and a decrease in activity level. Examples of this pain type are strained muscles, disc injuries, and sprained ligaments. Treatment of these injuries by chiropractic is usually very successful with a full recovery expected in only a few weeks.

Chronic back pain is pain that is deep, dull, achy, and burning. The pain typically lasts for a long time, from weeks to months. Numbness and tingling into one or both legs is common. Working and performing the normal activities of living are difficult, (getting out of bed and tying your shoes). It can be a result of previous injury that was not properly treated and healed, or it can be an ongoing problem. Examples of these problems include fibromyalgia, herniated disc (untreated), and severe arthritis. Treating chronic back problems is more difficult than treating acute back pain. However, with proper care, many patients are able to experience substantial, if not complete recovery.

What are the Treatment Options for Back Pain?

When most people think about back pain they think about chiropractic. Chiropractors have been presented the honor of being known as “back doctors.” They work with the spine using gentle techniques to put the bones back in place and to un-

pinch the nerves causing the pain. Chiropractors also rehabilitate the spine to help the muscles and ligaments heal.

Medical doctors use NSAID's (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) and other medications to block the pain. Surgery is the option of last resort. If all other attempts have been tried and failed, then the surgeon cuts into the spine to remove the problem tissue.

What can I do to prevent back pain?

- Exercise is important to strengthen back muscles, lose weight, and improve posture. A proper exercise routine should be discussed with your doctor.
- Proper lifting techniques need to be followed:
 - Bend at the knee
 - Lift with leg muscles not back muscles, and keep object close to your body
 - Do not bend forward and twist when lifting, keep the back straight
- Avoid prolonged standing. If you have to stand prop your foot up on a stool.
- Do not wear high heels
- If driving long distances in a car get out and stretch every few hours.

Following these suggestions will help to prevent future back problems. Back pain is very common in today's fast paced world, so if you are currently experiencing back pain call your chiropractor today. They can put you on the road to recovery.