

# Back Pain

Our spine or back is the central support structure for our entire body. It houses and protects our spinal cord, which is our body's main electrical system. The spinal cord is the basis for our brain to communicate with our bodies and vice versa. This allows us to move around and feel various sensations including pain. The spine is made of combination of bones carefully stacked on each other with shock absorbing discs between the bones. This along with the muscle that support the spine gives your back it's ability to support your body as you perform your daily activities.

Although our backs are very strong they are designed for stability, and not excess or repetitive motion. Most people think that the reason that they suffer low back pain is because they worked too hard or lifted too much. The reality is that most cases of back pain are a result of wear and tear from poor positioning such as bending or twisting with your back over time. Many people report pain following simple activities like bending down to pick something as light as a pencil. The pencil obviously is not that heavy, but the wear and tear of bending over with your back has finally taken its toll. Bending over to pick up the pencil was simply the last straw on the camel's back.

Thus, when it comes to back pain, your



## Stay Healthy

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mother was right. "Sit up straight, stand up tall and quit slouching." Posture and body mechanics are the two most effective methods of injury prevention. If you have a job that requires a lot of sitting or office work you should make sure that you are sitting up straight. Your low back should be supported and your work station may need to be modified. Also consider periodic stretch or standing breaks to allow your muscle and spine to change position. Sitting in one position, no matter how good your posture is, is not good for your back. When lifting objects, make sure you first check the weight to see if you need some help, or if two trips may be necessary. When lifting, always bend with your legs, not your

back. Also avoid twisting your back. Keep your back straight and turn with your feet.

Another major factor in fighting back pain is controlling your weight. Being overweight can lead to a higher incidence in low back pain. This is especially evident in men, who commonly store extra weight known as the "pot belly" and in expecting mothers. The extra weight in this area moves your center of gravity and causes increased stress on the back. Also abdominal muscles are stretched out and can not provide the additional support that the back needs. A simple exercise routine can help control your weight and keep your abdominals strong.

There are several treatment options for back pain. If back pain is new and minor, icing for 15 minutes often helps. People often make the mistake of putting heat on right away. This often feels good for a short time, but heat can increase inflammation in the back and make it worse in the long run. If back pain continues for more than a day or two, people should seek out further pain relieve from medical professionals.

The most common treatment for back pain is pain medication. Physician prescribed medications help control severe

pain, however, the medication does not treat the problem only the symptoms. Chiropractic manipulation is also a common treatment option. This can help align the spine and increase mobility, reduce spasms and stimulate circulation to promote healing. There are also options available through physical therapy which includes massage, various modalities to improve healing and control pain, and therapeutic exercise to control symptoms, restore motion, and help prevent the return of injury. This is important because once you have had a back injury you are at higher risk to have another one.

Get educated, get health smart, and live longer and happier.

In some of the more severe cases back pain can be treated with epidural injections which involve an anti-inflammatory medication being injected into the area of the back which is causing pain. In some cases surgery may be an option. Surgery is usually only considered in the most severe of cases and after more conservative options have failed.

It is obviously best to avoid back pain with good body mechanics, posture, and weight control through exercise. However, if you suffer a back injury get the medical attention you need right away it can make the difference between a temporary setback or a long-term problem.