

## Back Pain Causes and Advice

Think of how hard your back works on a day-to-day basis. Even if your job involves sitting at a desk rather than digging in a ditch, your back is constantly on the move. Bending up and down, swaying side-to-side, twisting and turning. It's really no wonder that eighty percent of American adults report back pain.

Even though your back is a well-designed structure of bone, nerves, muscles and other soft tissues, it is extremely vulnerable to injury and back pain. Either of these can be crippling.

With four out of every five adults suffering from some sort of back pain, you can bet that you will face the condition at some point in your life. There are steps, however, to help prevent back pain from affecting you, or to keep the pain you now feel from becoming even worse. .

### Causes

Most back pain occurs in the lower back, where the majority of your body weight is supported. Lower back pain is often a result of strained back muscles and ligaments due to any of the following activities:

- \* Stress
- \* Improper posture
- \* Heavy lifting
- \* Sudden, awkward movement
- \* Muscle spasm

In some cases, back pain can be attributed to more specific conditions:

- \* **Herniated Disc:** This condition occurs when the disc material presses against a nerve.
- \* **Sciatica:** A herniated disc will often press on the sciatic nerve. The condition causes sharp, shooting pain through the buttocks and down the back of the leg.
- \* **Spondylosis:** In this type of arthritis, the spine undergoes degenerative changes brought about by aging.
- \* **Spinal Stenosis:** When the space around the spinal cord and nerve roots become narrow, nerves can become pinched in the narrowed area. This condition can be caused by arthritis and bone overgrowth.
- \* **Spondylolisthesis:** One vertebra in the spinal column slips forward over another, causing severe back pain.

All of these back pain causes is definable, so treatment procedures are easily identified. There are other specific conditions, not mentioned here, that can cause back pain. These additional conditions rarely occur.

### Medical Advice

Home treatment and self-care are usually the first methods chosen when dealing with back pain. However, there are instances when back pain may signal a more serious medical problem. Consult with your doctor if you experience the following symptoms with your back pain:

- \* Unexplained weight loss
- \* Constant or intensified back pain, particularly when lying down at night
- \* Back pain that spreads down one or both legs
- \* Numbness, weakness and a tingling in one or both legs
- \* Unusual bladder or bowel problems
- \* Fever, and abdominal pain or pulsation
- \* Pain that follows a fall, a blow to your back or other injury

If you experience any of the above symptoms along with your back pain, be sure to see your doctor immediately. If you are over fifty years of age, seek your doctor's advice about your back pain, even if you do not experience any of the symptoms listed above. People with a history of cancer, steroid use, osteoporosis and drug or alcohol abuse should also see the doctor if they experience back pain.

The trick to effectively treating back pain comes from knowing the back pain causes. If in doubt, make an appointment with your doctor. Find the cause, and you'll be better able to treat the condition and resume your pain-free lifestyle.