

ORTHONOTES

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Low Back Pain Won't Relieve Itself!

“Eighty percent of the population of the United States, at some point in their life, is going to have back pain.”¹

Could you fall into this percentage?

The human back and spinal structure is a highly complex part of the body. It consists of bones, discs, muscles, and ligaments that all play a critical role for movement of all extremities. The back is a strong and fundamental part of the body, but it does have its weaknesses.

The lower back is the most common area for pain and can limit everyday activity. In order to help prevent it, it is important to know what it is and how it develops. There are two degrees of low back pain (LBP) people can suffer from – acute and chronic. Both affect the same area of the body; however, they differ in frequency of occurrence.

Acute

Acute low back pain is considered to be any discomfort in the lower back region, lumbar muscles, or pelvis that lasts three months or less. In most cases, the pain is treated effectively, diminishes, and life returns back to normal.

Cases of acute LBP can differ greatly according to a person's lifestyle or the injury at-hand. LBP can arise from something as

simple as sitting on a wallet or money clip (sciatica) for an extended period of time. Acute pain can also come from a more severe injury, such as a herniated disc in the spine. However, severe back injuries can take longer than three months to heal, (technically making them chronic). For an injury to be considered acute, the pain must be treated and subsided within three months.

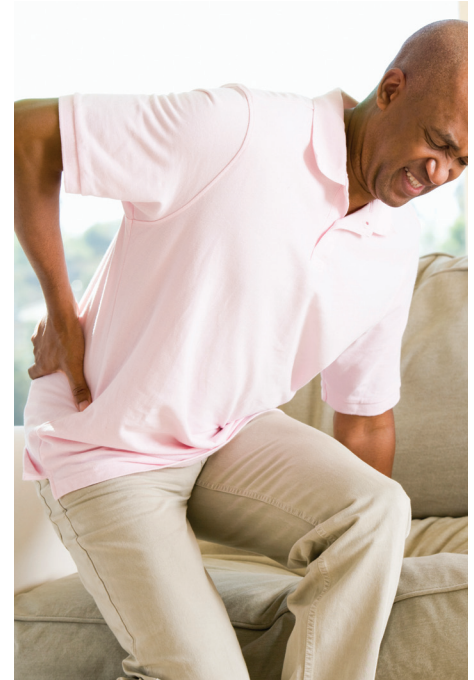
To effectively treat LBP, muscles and ligaments need to be properly restored, which can be done through chiropractic adjustments and staying physically active. It is important to avoid prolonged bed rest, as the strained muscles and ligaments must be strengthened. According to an about.com online article, *“Bed rest is no longer recommended and may delay recovery. Patients should remain active, but should let the pain guide his or her behavior and should probably stop normal physical activities for the first couple of days in order to calm symptoms.”*²

Lack of exercise, work situations, smoking, and stress are all contributors of LBP.

It is important to have an active, healthy lifestyle to reduce symptoms. Proper nutrition, exercise, and smoking cessation are ways to help reduce pain, increase blood flow, and establish a healthy body.

It is smart to have a plan when taking on LBP. Routinely visiting a chiropractor for adjustments well help to restore the injured muscles and ligaments in the spine. *“The chiropractic approach is to find the cause of the pain and treat it directly. This may involve realigning the spine or extremities by chiropractic adjustments, physiotherapy*

*for the muscles and ligaments, rehabilitative exercises, or a combination of these.”*³ DCs can recommend ways to lead healthier lives outside of their office by offering tips on exercise and nutrition. Maintaining this healthier lifestyle will help reduce the intake of temporary medicine and promote overall wellness.



Chronic

Low back pain is considered chronic if it lasts longer than three months. However, this does not necessarily mean that the injury is more severe than acute. There are possibilities that chronic pain can develop from degenerative disorders, scoliosis, or bone disease. But the percentage of people that suffer chronic pain from severe conditions is much smaller.

Chronic LBP can result from the same injuries that were mentioned in acute LBP. The outlying difference between the two is chronic LBP lasts longer than three months; it can even stick around for years. One of the greatest problems many patients face with chronic LBP is not being able to pinpoint the pain.

When the lower back's muscles and ligaments have been strained, or if a spinal disc has herniated, the injured components must be repaired. The body will not automatically heal what has been damaged by itself. This pain can be subsided with heat, ice, or painkillers; but if a patient is unwilling to be proactive, low back pain will persist. This is a large factor for men and women that claim disability, or do not return to work.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, *“Americans spend at least **\$50 billion** each year on low back pain, the most common cause of job-related disability and a leading contributor to missed work. Back pain is the second most common neurological ailment in the United States – only headache is more common.”⁴*

In many cases, prolonged pain is a result of unhealthy habits. Chronic LBP can result from lack of exercise, obesity, or strains caused by lifting. The best remedy to treat lasting back pain is to be proactive. This involves routine visits with a chiropractor and exercising to restore the injured area. Also, cutting out old habits that induce stress on the body plays a major role in fighting constant back pain.

Most cases of chronic LBP do not call for invasive surgery. Surgery can be expensive and leave permanent scarring. There is also a degree of maintenance that incurs after surgery. Like other injuries, there must be rehabilitation; if the recommended stretching and exercising is negated, pain could resume.

“How can you prevent becoming part of the 80% of Americans with back pain?”



Start a wellness goal for yourself. Making a few changes in the way you live can help reduce the chances of establishing persistent back pain.

Here are a few choices that can be implemented in everyday life:

- Exercise daily to help increase blood and oxygen flow in the body.
- Eat foods that are rich in vitamins and nutrients.
- Don't eat excessive amounts of junk/fast foods.

There are many habits that occur throughout the day that can induce back pain.

Some things have become so routine in our lives that we do not realize they could be harmful.

Here are a few daily occurrences that can cause low back pain:

- Sitting on a wallet all day at work.
- Sleeping on your stomach.
- Wearing uncomfortable and unsupportive shoes.
- Slouching in a desk chair at work.
- Smoking tobacco and other bad habits.

A DC's expertise in spinal manipulation and extremity adjustments can be beneficial for low back pain. Chiropractors can also provide techniques for at-home recovery, starting with exercises and nutrition.

Take care of your body. Pain will not relieve itself!

References

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