

Suffering from Low Back Pain?

Here are some things you can do to help yourself.

Lower back pain is one of the top five reasons why people go to the doctor's office, and it is estimated that over 80% of the population will experience low back pain at some time or another during their life.

Serious low back injury can be caused by traumatic events, such as motor vehicle accidents, falls, and sports-related injuries. More serious accidents can cause fractured bones, disc herniations, or torn ligaments or tendons. Conditions of this nature can be extremely painful and require medical attention.

Fortunately, the majority of people who have back pain usually have not had a serious accident. It is common to have muscle aches and pains after over-exertion, such as cleaning up the yard, and weekend-related recreational activities. While these conditions can be painful, they do not usually lead to chronic problems and can be managed in a more conservative manner.

There are many things that we can do on our own to help minimize the effect of low back pain and to help decrease the likelihood of it occurring:

Maintain Your Proper Body Weight

Most of us know that being overweight can lead to serious health issues. The likelihood of developing diabetes and heart disease are significantly increased when one is obese. Back problems can also be affected by one's weight. Even carrying around an extra ten pounds puts more pressure on the joints and discs of the low back. With time, this can lead to degenerative changes which can cause back pain and limit mobility.

Don't smoke

We all know that smoking leads to heart disease and cancer, but you probably don't realize that smokers have a higher incidence of back pain. Consider it one more reason why you might want to think about quitting smoking or never starting.

Be mindful of movement and body position

Think before you bend or lift. Make sure that when you do bend and lift you are facing the object straight on and not at an angle. Remember to squat and use your legs to help you lift. Try to keep your back straight and avoid twisting it.

Consider your posture. When sitting, try to sit up straight. It is best if your feet are touching the ground and your low back is supported. You may need to adjust the setup of your work space to achieve this. If you must sit for an extended period of time, remember to frequently get up to move and stretch.

When positioning yourself to sleep, it may be helpful to sleep on your side with a small pillow between your knees or on your back with a pillow underneath your knees. Both of these positions help to take stress off of the low back.

Stretch and use ice and heat

If you are about to participate in a physical activity that requires a lot of twisting, lifting, or bending, it is good to make sure that your muscles are warm and flexible. Stretching exercises can be helpful to prepare you for your activity. If you find yourself sore after your activity, applying an ice pack with a thin covering for 15 minutes may be helpful to reduce inflammation. This can be followed by a hot shower to soothe sore muscles.

Self-care is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, and, combined with proper preparation, can go a long way in helping to maintain a healthy, pain-free back