

Back Pain Fact Sheet

Incidence

- More than 65 million Americans suffer from low back pain each year.
- Half of all patients who suffer from an episode of low back pain will have a recurrence within a year.¹
- Back pain is the second most common reason people see a physician and the third most frequent reason for surgery.²
- The degenerative process of the spine begins by the age of 30 and plays a significant role in making the spine susceptible to back pain.³
- Low back pain affects 4 out of 5 adults during their lifetime.
- 30% of adults over age 30 have degenerative disc disease.⁴
- More than 500,000 spine surgeries are performed annually in the U.S.

Back Pain & Work

- Back injury accounts for 31.8% of all on-the-job injuries.⁵
- OSHA reports that 1.8 million workers each year suffer from injuries such as low back pain and carpal tunnel syndrome, draining up to \$50 billion from the U.S. economy and costing employers between \$15 billion and \$18 billion in workers' comp expenses.
- Low back pain is the second most frequent reason (after the common cold) that people under the age of 45 miss work.⁴
- Among people with chronic pain, anxiety and depression are common findings.⁶

Back Pain Treatment

- Studies have shown that inactivity does not give the back a chance to heal but rather weakens the abdominal and back muscles that support the spine, making injury more likely.
- Exercise has been cited as the central element in back pain treatment. It strengthens muscles, keeps blood circulating to heal injured tissues and fluid flowing through the spinal discs.⁷
- Only about 3% of back injuries have some physical problem that can be treated with surgery.⁸
- Patients who underwent treatment at a multidisciplinary pain center reported the following:
 - Identical reductions in pain to those attained from surgery
 - More than 65% discontinued the use of opioid medication post-treatment
 - 65% experienced increased activity post-treatment
 - Significantly fewer surgeries for pain
 - 3 to 6 times less likely to be hospitalized⁶

¹ American Association of Neurological Surgeons

² National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey III

³ MayoClinic.com

⁴ American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

⁵ National Council on Compensation Insurance

⁶ Zoidis, John, D. "Managing Chronic Pain." *Rehab management*. August/September 1996. 30-33.

⁷ Ebisch, Robert. Who's afraid of back spasms? *Sky*. October 1998. 34-40.

⁸ Meyeroff, Wendy. Fighting back. *Rehab management*. April/May 1997. 71-76., according to Dr. Hamilton Hall, medical director of the Canadian Back Institute



Prevention tips

Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous exercise

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Wear shock-absorbing shoes and avoid high heels

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Pay attention to your posture throughout the day

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Sit in a chair that has arm rests and provides good lower back support

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Stretch periodically

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Lose excess weight, which can place additional stress on the back

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Learn to manage stress, which can aggravate back pain

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Don't smoke

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Take a hot shower or bath to reduce pain

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Use a cold pack to reduce swelling or soreness

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Don't sleep on your stomach

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Choose office furniture that is ergonomically designed

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Don't cradle the phone between your head and shoulder