

## **Back Pain....You too?**

By Michael Rizkalla

Back pain affects an overwhelming 80% of Americans at some point in their lives. And if that statistic doesn't shock you, here are a few more: Back pain is one of the most common reasons for missed work; it's the second most common reason for visits to the doctor office after respiratory infections. But the most staggering statistic is that Americans spend at least \$50 Billion each year on back pain and that doesn't include costs associated with lost personal income and lost employer productivity. So the take home message: back pain is very common, and that's unfortunate because it really doesn't have to be.

The back is a very complicated structure because it serves multiple purposes; it supports the upright posture of the body, it's flexible to allow bending and twisting, and it encases and protects the spinal cord. To gain the flexibility in the back, we have 33 separate bone segments instead of one solid structure, and in between each segment we have a disc that acts as a shock absorption system. Most back pain is caused by simple strains in the anti-gravity muscles that support the spine and help to keep us upright. The more severe and chronic back pains, tend to be related to the discs which may fall out of alignment and put pressure on the nerves, referred to as "bulging disc", or split or rupture which is referred to as a "herniated disc".

As with most ailments, prevention is the best cure, and back pain is no different. As the statistics suggest, we may all at some point suffer from an ache here and there, but with a few simple guidelines we can all avoid more severe, and chronic pains.

**Exercise:** it sounds cliché, but low impact exercise can help strengthen and condition the back to allow the muscles to endure the daily grind. Abdominal strengthening exercises will help relieve pressure from the back muscles.

**Loose Weight:** Being overweight will put strain on your back muscles.

**Good Posture:** This involves training your body in standing, sitting, lying to always maintain the natural curves of the spine. .

**Good Shoes:** Avoid heels, choose shoes that have a good arch support.

**Body Mechanics:** Perhaps the most important of all, is proper body mechanics especially when lifting. Basic principles like: get close to an object, bend your knees when lifting and lowering, lift straight up, and avoid twisting!!

Keep tuned into next month's article, where we discuss treatment options for people that are already suffering from chronic back pain. But hopefully some of these tips will help you avoid future back pain. If you have more questions on this topic, or any other please visit us at [www.trinity-rehab.com](http://www.trinity-rehab.com), or call us at Trinity Rehab 732 920-4500.

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