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Low Back Pain, Sciatica Neuritis and Bulging/Herniated Disc

Who of us can say that they never had back pain? I know that I cannot, because I remember severely injuring my L5-S1 disc in my senior year of Chiropractic College, while squatting with 400 lbs. I remember having severe back pain and sciatic neuritis for a few weeks while I was being treated with chiropractic adjustments and I can attest to its efficacy in treating severe back injuries.

It has been stated in many articles and books that up to 80% of all adults will eventually experience back pain. An article published in Scientific American, Aug. 1998, Vol. 279, Number #2, Richard A. Deyo, shows how prevalent this problem is in the US and also worldwide and how it is treated. It point out studies of MRI of 98 individuals who were asymptomatic but had herniated disc, so what is the cause of back pain? There is a book written by two science writers of The New York Times, Arthur C. Klein and Dava Sobel, title "Backache Relief", Times Books, 1985. The book describes the most effective method that had long lasting and moderate long remission of back pain for most people suffering this malady. The most effective were chiropractic and the specialty in chiropractic of Applied Kinesiology. This was followed by Physiatrist (doctor of physical medicine).

So what causes back pain baring trauma (fall, car accidents etc.)? The answers are many. Some examples are short leg, which is a universal fact average is ¼ to ½ of an inch, skeletal anomalies of the pelvis or vertebra and the fact the ever one weigh more on the right because the liver is on the right. But the most common is muscular imbalances due to poor muscle tone, poor posture in standing, sitting and even sleeping position contribute to back pain. The following illustration will point out some of the causative factors and correction procedures to be avoided.

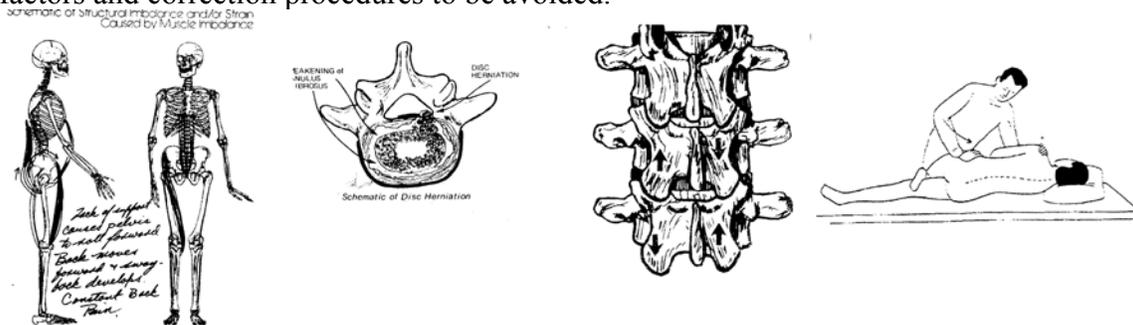


Fig. #1 Muscle Imbalance Fig. #2 Disc Herniation Fig. #3 Imbrication Fig. #4 Side Posture Correction
Figure #1 is one of the most important factors in back pain, which is muscle weakness and imbalance. This is due to the fact that muscle moves bone and bone does not move muscle. This show weakness of abdominal, hamstring and gluteus maximus muscle weakness that allow the sacrospinalis to over contract causing back pain.

(Over)

This pattern of muscular imbalance will have back pain upon arising that gradually improves as the day goes on.

Figure #2 shows the disc herniation note the cartilage is laid down in circular rings similar to annual growth rings of a tree. The disc center has a jelly like mass know as the nucleus pulposus that distributes the stress equally across the disc. This weakens with repeated injuries and a bulge will occur if the injuries continue, it will tear or herniate, allowing the nucleus to escape into the spinal canal. A herniation is accumulative and does not occur on one instance.

Figure #3 is a downward compression so that the facets are jammed. This is known as imbrication. This will effect the movement of fluid in the disc and cause further deterioration of this condition. There are three major symptoms of imbrication. First is a deep pain in the center of the back at the belt line like a “toothache” that will not go away it can be mild to severe. Second is a feeling that you cannot get the pelvis center under you and third is a feeling that your whole torso is driven down in to the pelvis. This is easily corrected and will give almost immediate relief to the pain.

Figure #4 is a corrective procedure known as a side posture correction sometime referred to as the “million dollar roll”. This type of adjustment is absolutely counter indicated when the disc is compromised by a bulge or herniation, because the anulus fibrosus can be torn and made worse. The side posture lumbar or sacroiliac correction is well tolerated in the young individual below age 40. As we age the disc loses some of the fluid content and can be herniated with this type of adjustment.

What do I do to treat back pain? The answer to this question is simple. I treat the total person with the back pain and not just the symptoms. This means that I evaluate the structural problems, and correct the muscular imbalances with AK and remedial exercise. I look at the nutritional side of the problem. This means diet is checked for chemical stressors, which cause the loss of ligamentous support. We add to the diet additional vitamin C that improves the connective tissue support. Inflammation is reduced with omega 3 & 6 oils, and bromelain, which will reduce disc swelling if present.

Finally in some cases we need to look at the emotional side that can play an important part in chronic back pain. This subject is approached in a book titled “Healing Back Pain-The Mind Body Connection”, John Sarno, M.D. Here he explains how the mind plays an important contributing to many chronic back pains. Dr. Sarno is a professor of clinical rehabilitation at, New York University’s, Rusk Institute. I was fortunate to spend a year working at Rusk Institute before I started my chiropractic training. Patients with emotional back pain connections can be treated with two emotional techniques of NET which stands for Neuroemotional Technique and TFT which is Though Field Therapy. Both are very effective in correcting this type of back pain.