

Do You Know How Your Back Works?

General information offered to all my valued patients- Dr. Matt Butler DC

Function: Your spine is one of the most important parts of your body. It helps you stand upright with support, while allowing you to move about and bend. The spine also protects the spinal cord, which encompasses nerves that connect your brain with the rest of your body allowing you to control your movements. Keeping your spine healthy is vital if you want to live an active life.



Anatomy: Your spine is made up of 24 vertebrae, which creates the spinal column. Between each vertebra is a soft, gel-like cushion called a disc that helps absorb pressure and keeps the bones from rubbing against each other. The spine also has joints called facet joints; the facets link the vertebrae together and allow for flexibility of the spinal column.

Lumbar Spine (Lower Back): The lowest part of the spine is called the lumbar spine, which is made up of five vertebrae. Since the lumbar spine is connected to your pelvis, most of your weight bearing and body movements take place there, resulting in injury or overuse. People lifting heavy objects or performing repetitive movements often place strain on the lumbar spine. Spinal Stabilization is important for your well being and the health of your body.

Understanding the Diagnosis of Your Back Pain Disc-Related Back Pain: In a true disc-related back pain, the disc between two vertebrae develops a bulge, which places pressure on the nerve just posterior to the disc and spine. Sometimes people experience leg pain along with numbness occurring in the lower leg or foot.



Sprain: A sprain is an injury to a spinal ligament due to a twist, fall or other incident. In order to have a ligament become injured, a trauma is usually present. It would take a great amount of force to injure, stretch or tear the strong structure. When a ligament of the spine is sprained, too much joint mobility is created allowing the joint to move in any one direction freely, usually resulting in pain.

Strain: A strain is similar to a sprain, but the strain involves trauma to a muscle. Muscles are strong like ligaments, therefore it would require a significant amount of force to tear. The degree of pain and severity of a strain varies for each incident based on the extent to which the ligament or muscle fibres are torn.

Subluxation: A subluxation is a joint injury where a small spinal joint becomes stuck in a position that may restrict movements resulting in pain and discomfort. A subluxation may occur without trauma to the area, and may affect any level of the spine.

Hypermobility: Hypermobility is a problem within the joint. A hypermobile joint allows for too much motion, where as in the previous condition subluxation, the joint is stuck in a position. Hypermobile joints display greater than normal amounts of bending and rotating about the joint. The joint may remain painless if the muscles protecting the joint are able to control excessive amounts of motion, (ex) gymnastics or people born with loose joints.

Osteoarthritis (OA): Osteoarthritis is a degenerative disease that many people will experience as they grow older, because our joints wear over time. It involves the protective layer of cartilage which line the joints. Over time and frequent use of our joints the protective cartilage layer wears thin, exposing the bones underneath to rub against each other. The most common joints to become affected are the larger joints such as the hip and knees. Arthritic changes in the lower back and neck are also very common areas of pain due to the loss of smoothness on the joint surfaces.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA): Rheumatoid Arthritis is an autoimmune disease, which means the body fails to recognize its own tissues and initiates self-destruction. This type of arthritis may cause inflammation in any joint of the body. RA is also a degenerative disease that will eventually destroy tissues within the joint such as cartilage and ligaments. Overall individuals with RA need to take early precautions for health, because the damage creates unstable and weak joints.



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