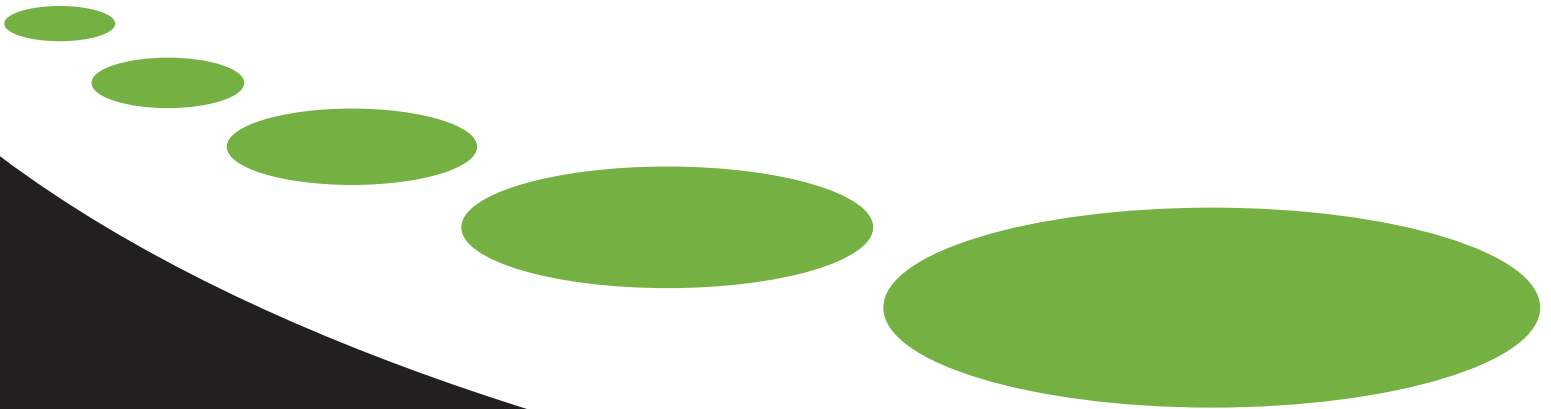




How to

Relieve Back Pain Without Surgery



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What Could Be Causing My Back Pain?



The spine is a marvelous and complex structure. However, because it is responsible for supporting the weight of the upper body while enabling us to bend and move, it is also a commonly injured area of the body that can cause a lot of discomfort.

Back pain can affect people of any age, for different reasons. The primary cause of pain can be related to a problem with the back itself or there may be a problem located in another part of the body that needs to be addressed.

Typically there are two categories of back pain:

- **Acute back pain which should only last for a short period of time.**
- **Chronic back pain which may be ongoing and long-lasting (usually longer than three to six months), especially if you do not seek medical treatment.**

Regardless of the duration, back pain can be uncomfortable and debilitating for many people.

The most common causes of back pain are strain and problems with back structures.

What is the Difference Between Acute and Chronic Back Pain?

Causes of Acute Back Pain

- **Muscle or ligament strain.** Over time, constant strain on your back can cause pain. Movements such as repeated heavy lifting or a sudden awkward movement can strain back muscles and spinal ligaments.
- **Poor posture.** Slouching when reading, driving, working, or checking your phone puts excessive pressure on the spine, which can increase your chances of developing back pain.
- **Sleeping position.** A poor sleeping position can put unnecessary pressure on your hips, neck and back causing back pain when you wake up.
- **Injury or trauma.** Back pain can follow an accident, such as a car accident or falling off a ladder. Pain can also be a result from performing tasks that are out of your natural daily activity or fitness routine, such as weekend gardening or heavy snow shoveling, that require the over extension of muscle groups.
- **Sciatica.** Sciatica (lumbar radiculopathy) refers to pain that radiates along the path of the sciatic nerve, which branches from your lower back through your hips and buttocks and down each leg. It's most commonly caused by another back condition such as a herniated disk in the lower back that irritates the nerve. It can also be caused muscle spasms in the back or buttocks.

Causes of Chronic Back Pain

- **Bulging discs.** Discs in your spine act as cushions between the bones (vertebrae). The soft material inside a disc can bulge outside of it's usual capsule container, pressing on the nerves, which can cause pain. There are times, however, when a bulging disc produces no pain at all because it is not pressing on any nearby nerves.
- **Disc herniation.** A herniated disc occurs when the soft, interior of a disc leaks the gel-like fluid inside, irritating nearby muscles, joints, or nerve roots. Typically, a herniated disc irritates the sciatic nerve, causing sharp, stabbing pain down the backs of the legs, called sciatica. Sciatica is usually more noticeable than back pain and can also be caused by conditions other than a herniated disc.
- **Arthritis.** In some cases, arthritis in the spine (called osteoarthritis) can affect the back. Over time, it can lead to a narrowing of the space around the spinal cord, a condition called spinal stenosis.
- **Osteoporosis.** Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become thin and weak. It occurs when the creation of new bone doesn't keep up with the removal of old bone. Pain is not a symptom of the condition itself, but rather a symptom of the compression fractures that can develop if your bones become porous and brittle.
- **Skeletal irregularities.** Abnormal curves to the spine can also lead to back pain. The three main types of curvature disorders include scoliosis (spine curves to the side), lordosis (exaggerated inward curvature), and kyphosis (excessive outward curvature).

It's important to seek help from a chiropractor or other health care professional when you have chronic back pain to see what can be done to reduce your pain and improve your quality of life.

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Who is at Risk for Back Pain?



Anyone can experience back pain, even children and teenagers. There are, however, certain factors that can increase your risk:

- **Age.** Back pain tends to be more common in individuals age 30 and older.
- **Physical inactivity.** Lack of exercise can result in weak muscles, which can cause pain.
- **Excess weight.** Being overweight or obese can put extra strain on your back.
- **Improper lifting.** Lifting with your back muscles, rather than using the muscles in your legs can cause sudden back pain. Or it can lead to back pain over time if you repeatedly lift objects, such as at work, using more of your back than your leg muscles.
- **Smoking.** Nicotine reduces blood flow and inhibits nutrient absorption in the spine.
- **Diseases.** Certain medical conditions, such as cancer or arthritis can contribute to back pain.
- **Psychological conditions.** Back pain may occur more in people who are prone to feelings of depression and anxiety.

If you are experiencing back pain that doesn't go away on its own after a few days of rest, make an appointment with our office for an evaluation.

For an appointment call: **(281) 292-4777**

What is the Difference Between a Bulging Disc and a Herniated Disc?



Several terms are used to describe spinal disc problems and the pain that often comes with them. Two of the more common spinal disc conditions are bulging discs and herniated discs. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, there are actually significant differences between the two.

What are Spinal Discs?

The spine is made up of bones called vertebrae that protect the delicate spinal cord. Between those vertebrae are small, round cushions made of fibrocartilage and collagen, called vertebral discs. Within the outer portion of the disc is an inner core (nucleus pulposus) made up of a jelly-like material called mucoprotein gel. These discs act as shock absorbers in the spine, hold the vertebrae together, and allow the spine to bend and twist.

What is a Bulging Disc?

A bulging disc also known as a protruding disc is when a disc in your spine literally bulges outside its usual area. It is considered to be “contained”, meaning the disc remains intact and mucoprotein gel has not leaked out. Bulging discs don’t always cause pain since they generally do not protrude far enough to press on a nerve. When there is pain, however, it is usually felt in the lower back and triggered by actions such as bending, coughing and sneezing.

As we age, the discs in our spine tend to dehydrate and stiffen, which often results in the discs becoming slightly compressed or flattened. Because of this, protruding discs are fairly common and considered to be a rather a normal part of the aging process. Other causes of bulging discs may include a spinal injury or repetitive spinal stress.

Bulging discs are typically diagnosed with a review of your medical history, a physical examination, and imaging such as X-ray, CT scan, and MRI. If you are diagnosed with a bulging disc it is likely that your physician will recommend a course of treatments to help ease pain and other symptoms.

Given time, a bulging disc could become a herniated disc if left untreated.

What is a Herniated Disc?

A herniated disc, on the other hand, results when the disc cracks, allowing the inner fluid to protrude or leak. In addition to spinal degeneration, herniated discs can be caused by repetitive minor injuries or traumatic injury.

Herniated discs are also called ruptured discs or slipped discs. Regardless of what they are called, disc conditions such as these can lead to nerve root irritation or compression, which can cause pain as well as other symptoms, including tingling, numbness, and muscle weakness.

A herniated disc is diagnosed in the same manner as a bulging disc. While a herniated disc can be diagnosed with an X-ray, an MRI is often a more effective method as it gives the physician more detailed information.



What are the Treatment Options for a Bulging or Herniated Disc?



Conservative, nonsurgical treatment is usually the first course of action for a bulging or herniated disc. The goal is to reduce the symptoms of your condition so your spine can heal. It's also intended to help prevent future problems. While surgery may eventually be recommended for patients who have severe or debilitating pain that doesn't improve, it's not typically the first recommendation for most patients. Often times, conservative methods are enough to relieve symptoms and reduce back pain. And in some cases, conservative treatment can reverse the spinal condition.

One of the most common ways to treat lower back pain caused by a bulging or herniated disc is chiropractic care. Research has shown chiropractic care for the spine to be a highly effective method for treating symptoms of bulging and herniated discs, including sciatic nerve pain and lower back pain.

One of the most common ways to treat lower back pain caused by a bulging or herniated disc is chiropractic care.

Chiropractic Treatments for Bulging & Herniated Discs



Chiropractic adjustments work by helping to place your body in the proper position that then allows the body to heal itself. A chiropractor may perform one or more of the many different types of adjustments and other manual therapies used in chiropractic care. Therapies that may be used to treat a bulging or herniated disc can include:

- **Spinal decompression.** A type of motorized spinal traction that is used to reduce the pressure on the spinal discs. This is done by gently stretching the spine for a period of 15 to 30 minutes per treatment, over a period of several weeks, depending on the patient's condition. This method is a nonsurgical way to reduce pressure on the discs so that water and nutrients can surround the discs so they can heal. For many patients, the Back on Trac lumbar traction technology will be included for lower back pain relief.
- **Cold laser therapy.** A method in which a low-intensity laser is used to stimulate cells. When the laser is applied to the treatment area, affected tissues absorb the light. This causes blood to rush to the problem area, which in turn promotes healing of all damaged cell types, including muscle, ligament, cartilage, and nerves. Village Chiropractic offers a Robotic Class IV cold laser called Multiwave Locked System (MLS).
- **Electrical Muscle Stimulation (EMS).** A technique that delivers light electrical pulses to the muscles surround the site of back pain, may be used in conjunction with manual manipulation to help relieve pain.
- **Therapeutic exercise.** Exercise is also an effective method for treating disc problems. Your clinician may recommend a spinal stabilization program, which uses a series of targeted exercises to strengthen the body's core. Strengthening back muscles can help restore balance and range of motion, provide relief from back pain, and prevent future injury.

Other Treatments for Bulging & Herniated Discs



In addition to chiropractic care, your clinician may recommend other treatments for your bulging or herniated disc. The amount of pain you're experiencing and severity of the bulge or rupture will determine what steps to take next.

Some of the other treatments may include:

- **Medications.** Some patients may need to take medications to help relieve back pain caused by bulging or herniated discs. Depending on the severity of your case, your doctor may recommend over-the-counter pain medications. If that doesn't improve your pain, it may be necessary for your doctor to prescribe narcotics or muscle relaxers.
- **Steroid injections.** In some cases, inflammation-suppressing corticosteroids may be injected directly into the area surrounding the bulging or herniated disc to reduce swelling and inflammation, which can reduce pain.
- **Surgery.** A very small number of people with bulging or herniated discs need surgery. If all conservative treatments fail to improve your symptoms, it may be necessary to meet with a spine surgeon. There are several types of surgery for bulging or herniated discs, which include discectomy, laminotomy, foraminotomy, and spinal fusion or stabilization.

How Do I Prevent a **Bulging or Herniated Disc?**



According to the American Chiropractic Association (ACA), up to 80% of people are likely to experience back pain at some point in their lives. For many people, the pain they feel in their lower back – and oftentimes in their legs – is a result of a bulging or herniated disc. While there is no absolute way to prevent disc-related problems such as this, there are steps you can take to help reduce your risk.

Up to 80% of people are likely to experience back pain at some point in their lives.

Stay Active to Reduce Back Pain in the Future



Exercise to help strengthen your back muscles, promote mobility, and increase flexibility, which can take some of the pressure off the space between your discs. This is the area that can bulge or rupture, causing back pain that changes how you live your day to day life.

The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 15 minutes of vigorous exercise at least five days a week. Light strength training (also called weight training or resistance training) should account for two of those days. Strength training isn't intended to necessarily increase your back muscle strength. Rather you should focus on overall muscle strength, including a strong core. Strengthening your muscles leads to better support for your spine and less back pain when you perform daily activities such as lifting and bending.

Exercises to help prevent a bulging or herniated disc may include:

- Low-impact aerobic activities such as walking, swimming, or biking.
- Resistance training in the form of weight machines, free weights, or resistance bands. Stretching and core-stabilizing activities, such as yoga, pilates, or **McKenzie Method** exercises.
- When done with proper form, lunges, squats, and planks can also be beneficial.

While exercise is good, it's important to understand that the wrong kinds of exercises can actually put you at risk for back injuries.

- High impact aerobic activities performed too much such as running or other sports that include repetitive motions.
- Exercises like sit-ups or crunches, which only focus on the abdominal muscles, can actually cause back pain. Sit-ups and crunches encourage unnatural movement and strain on neck and back muscles.
- Avoid exercises that involve extreme or abrupt moves such as deadlifts, which can put extra strain on your back and cause disc issues.

It's always a good idea to consult with your doctor before beginning an exercise program, especially if you have been experiencing back pain.

Maintain a Healthy Weight to Fend Off Back Pain



Being overweight puts extra strain on your spine that could cause the discs to break down at an earlier age. But losing weight isn't just good for your spine, it's good for your overall health and well-being. In addition to exercising, focus on eating a healthy diet with plenty of nutrient-rich anti-inflammatory foods to support a healthy spine.

Some of the best anti-inflammatory foods you can add to your diet include:

- High-fiber fruits and vegetables, such as carrots, tomatoes, broccoli, apples, and strawberries
- Potassium-rich foods, such as green leafy vegetables, avocados, bananas, coconut water, and cultured dairy
- Foods rich in Omega-3 fats like fish and flaxseed
- Clean, lean proteins, such as chicken, turkey, grass-fed beef, and cage-free eggs

In addition to eating healthy foods, it's important to stay hydrated. There are many health benefits that come from drinking plenty of water, including a healthy spine and back. Spinal discs consist largely of water, therefore, keeping the body well hydrated will help maintain their good health. Consuming enough water can also help with weight management, which can lead to improved back health. The general rule of thumb is that you should drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day, however, some people may require more. This is why it is a good idea to sip water throughout the day, rather than only when thirsty.



Improve **Your Posture**



Slouching when reading, driving, working, or checking your phone puts excessive pressure on the spine, which can increase your chances of developing a bulging or herniated disc. By practicing the following techniques, you can improve your posture.

When sitting:

- Keep your feet on the floor, with knees bent at a 90° angle
- Relax your shoulders
- Keep your elbows close to your body
- Distribute the weight evenly across your hips
- Make sure your back is fully supported
- Take breaks every 20-30 minutes

When standing:

- Stand up straight and tall with feet shoulder width apart
- Keep your shoulders back
- Pull your stomach in
- Let your arms hang down naturally at your sides
- Keep your head level
- Distribute most of your weight on the balls of your feet



Use Proper Lifting Techniques

Using proper lifting techniques can help prevent avoidable back injuries. When lifting, use your powerful legs and buttocks muscles, rather than your weaker back muscles. Never bend at the waist. Keep your feet shoulder width apart and your head and back in an upright position.

Quit Smoking! It Increases Back Pain!

It's no secret that smoking can have harmful effects on your health. What you may not know, however, is that the toxins in cigarettes can also affect your spine. Nicotine can prevent spinal discs from absorbing the nutrients that are necessary to maintain their structure. If you smoke, do yourself, and your spine, a favor and quit.



Get Regular Spinal Adjustments

Spinal adjustments do more than offer relief for back pain – they are beneficial for your general health and overall well-being. Chiropractic adjustments work by helping to place your body in the proper position that then allows the body to heal itself. Spinal adjustments can:

- Help relieve pressure and pain caused by inflammation and swelling
- Restore alignment of the spine that may be caused by poor posture
- Improve flexibility by restore motion in your joints

Simply put, chiropractic care can have an impact on your overall ability to move efficiently and with full strength.



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