

# *Your Health Reference Sheet*

## *Topic: Back Pain*

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“Oh my aching back!” has become the epidemic mantra of contemporary times, with more than 65 million Americans suffering from back pain, and those numbers are increasing daily. As a matter of fact, more than 85 percent of Americans over the age of 45 will suffer from back pain at some time in their lives, and 45 percent of those folks will have repeated “back attacks.” The way the odds play out is that a person is likely to have one serious episode of back pain for every 15 years of life. This means that you’re likely to have six severe “back attacks” if you live to be 90-plus years. With statistics like these, it’s no wonder that back pain is the second most common reason that people seek medical attention.

The increase in the number of back pain incidents is largely due to changes in lifestyle and work style over the course of time. Rather than being physical, as our ancestors were where they stood up while working, worked on farms or at work benches, and survived by hunting and gathering, we have evolved into sedentary creatures. With the advent of motor vehicles, we now sit as we go from place to place rather than walk; and with the advent of computers, we now sit all day at desks and workstations and for prolonged periods of time. It’s these recent changes that are responsible for the profound negative impact that we’re seeing on human physiology.

Our upright posture is designed for walking and moving, and people who do physical labor develop good muscle tone in their backs and legs. People who sit most of the day lose that muscle tone, and their backs are the first place to show it. To offset the ravages of a sedentary lifestyle, many people will turn to exercise programs to keep their muscles from atrophying due to the lack of use. And, while this is positive for the body, it’s important to stretch and warm the muscles before engaging in any strenuous activities to avoid injury. The best way to keep your back healthy is to walk and to emphasize toning the muscles.

Despite the pervasiveness of the back pain problem, there are few clear guidelines on how to properly diagnose and treat back pain. This, unfortunately, leaves sufferers trying one therapy after another in their quest to relieve the pain and bring back a sense of normalcy to their lives. However, things are changing and changing rapidly as new research is clearly revealing what works and what doesn’t work when it comes to dealing with back pain. The issue with back pain is that, while the symptomology is

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