

# Low Back Pain

*This week's health article was contributed by Dr. Richard Sheerin, DC, who works with me in my practice. Dr. Sheerin recently completed his certification as a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) and specializes in the treatment of low back pain.*

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke reports that, "at some point low back pain affects an estimated 8 out of 10 people. Americans spend at least \$50 billion each year on low back pain, the most common cause of job-related disability and a leading contributor to missed work. Back pain is the second most common neurological ailment in the United States — only headache is more common."

Chances are that you have had one or more episodes of low back pain in your life and have tried one or more treatments (chiropractic care, doctor prescribed medication, over-the-counter self-medication, physical therapy, etc.) with varying results. Recent

research in the diagnosis and treatment of low back pain has revealed that matching the individual patient to the best treatment for their condition has had the best outcome. As a chiropractor, this comes as no surprise, but to a segmented health care field full of specialists for each body part, this information is very enlightening.

Understanding the type of low back pain a patient is experiencing is the first step in matching them to the most effective treatment plan. Acute or short-term low back pain generally lasts from a few days to a few weeks. Most acute back pain is mechanical in nature — the result of trauma to the lower back or a disorder such as arthritis. Pain from trauma may be caused by a sports injury, work around the house or in the yard, or a sudden jolt such as a car accident or other stress on spinal bones and tissues. Symptoms may range from muscle ache to shooting or stabbing pain, limited flexibility and/or range of motion, or an inability to

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stand straight. Occasionally, pain felt in one part of the body may "radiate" from a disorder or injury elsewhere in the body. Some acute pain syndromes can become more serious if left untreated. Chronic back pain is measured by duration — pain that persists for more than three months is considered chronic. It is often progressive (worse over time) and the cause can be difficult to determine.

A recent clinical study compared the outcome of patients with low back pain receiving treatments matched or unmatched to their subgroup based on their initial symptoms. "Matching" a patient to a treatment meant taking into account the reported symptoms: length of time with pain, previous bouts of this specific type of pain, low back pain only or radiating pain, strong preference for walking or sitting, age of patient, current range of

motion, etc.

The results of the study concluded that patients receiving matched treatments experienced better short term and long term reduction in disability than those receiving unmatched treatments. Moreover, the study found specific criteria that responded more favorably to specific therapies. For example, factors favoring spinal manipulation included recent onset of symptoms, low back hypomobility (decreased range of motion) and low back pain only (no radiating symptoms). Patients reporting a strong preference for walking/sitting and diffuse pain that becomes pinpoint pain upon range of motion responded most favorably to specific exercise and active rehabilitation for individual muscles. Those patients who were younger in age, showed hypermobility (joint instability) upon exam, reported increasing frequency in episodes of pain or have had three or more prior episodes of low back pain responded most favorably to stabilization of abdominal and/or lumbar muscles groups.

Using this information, as well as performing a thorough history and exam, your healthcare

provider can more accurately diagnose and prescribe the proper rehabilitative plan of action to repair and restore function to your body. Most clinicians would agree that rarely does one approach lead to better outcomes with all patients. Those suffering with low back pain often exhibit varying symptoms over the course of time of their ailment. An integrative, multidisciplinary approach including chiropractic, physical therapy, strength training, and exercise, is the most effective way to restore normal function of non-specific low back pain.

*Dr. James Proodian is an author, educator, and healthcare practitioner specializing in chiropractic rehabilitation and other natural healing techniques. He also provides free health lectures and health screenings throughout Monmouth County. To have him speak at your company, school, or organization, contact the Natural Healthcare Center at 732-222-2219. Dr. Proodian's other health articles can also be found at [www.NaturalHealthcare-Center.com](http://www.NaturalHealthcare-Center.com).*