

Bodies in Motion

TOTAL HEALTH CENTER NEWS LETTER

“Expert Care with Caring Hands”

Volume 7

Total Health Center is a full service physical/occupational therapy clinic where expert patient care is our first priority. We treat a full range of orthopedic and neurologic conditions. Our clinic has therapists with advanced training and specialist certifications. Our goal is to help you, the patient, reach your full potential.

Lower Back Pain- The Epidemic

Approximately 80% of the general population will suffer back pain at some point in their lives. Of this group, over half will have recurrences. Recent estimates show that 25% of working men experience back pain each year; over time, eventually 4% change jobs. Men off work longer than 6 months have a 50% chance of returning to work; after 1 year the chance decreases to 20%. Virtually no one returns to the work force after 2 years off work. An average of 28.6 days/100 workers are lost each year. The cost is enormous in the United States and costs are estimated at 15-60 billion dollars annually. Back injuries account for at least 1/5 of all work-related injuries and approximately 1/3 of all compensable claims. However, it is estimated that <10% of the patients account for 90% of the total cost.

With the overall prevalence of lower back issues, it leads one to question the cause of the problem. There are many “causes” of lower back pain including disc pathology, stenosis, degenerative changes, instability, scoliosis or other alignment issues, fracture, or SI joint issues. With the variety in types of spinal problems the sources of the spinal disorder are obviously variable, but, certain factors are more likely to predispose a person to back problems including poor posture, using improper body mechanics, low fitness level/obesity, smoking and stressful living and work habits. Back disorders are the accumulation of months or years of bad habits. It is seldom caused by a single traumatic injury. A back disorder begins to develop long before the first episode of pain is experienced and the problem is usually still there after the episode of pain subsides. As the painful episode runs its course, the important treatment becomes preventing the next episode.

We typically start life with good posture (watch young children), but with time our posture often degrades. We are designed to have proper spinal curves and with “normal” alignment our ears should be over our shoulders and our shoulders over our hips. Due to muscle imbalances and weakness we develop with our daily activities, many people develop a forward head/rounded shoulder posture. The lumbar spine often develops excessive curvature or loses the normal curve (lordosis) due to muscular imbalance. These changes produce excessive stress on the spinal structures. Specific strengthening, stretching and mobilization can help individuals to improve their posture and decreased the load on the spine.

In addition to maintaining good, balanced posture, it is important to use good body mechanics (i.e. being aware of the way we move). It is not always about how much you lift or carry, but how you do it. Improper lifting creates greater strain on the spine. A few tips include keeping the load close to your body, test the load before lifting it, don't jerk as you lift, use the “power position”, kneel when working in a low position, and use team work when possible.

There is a long list of reasons people have for maintaining a healthy fitness level including cardiovascular training, weight control, mental well-being or to develop strength. Exercising regularly will also help you to live your life free of back pain. Exercise should be done



Call us at (269) 968-0888
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Fridays 7am-4pm



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Healthy Recipe of the Month

Corn and Blueberry Salad

6 ears of sweet corn
1 cup fresh blueberries
1 small cucumber, sliced
¼ cup finely chopped red onion
¼ cup fresh cilantro
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
2 Tbsp. lime juice
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 Tbsp honey
½ tsp. ground cumin

Cook corn in boiling water until tender. When cool enough to handle, cut corn from the cobs.

In a serving bowl combine corn, blueberries, cucumber, red onion, cilantro, and jalapeno. For dressing in screw-top jar combine lime juice, oil, honey, cumin, and ½ tsp. of salt. Cover and shake well to combine. Add to salad; toss. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Makes 6-8 servings. Each serving: 152 calories, 6 a fat. 0 mg cholesterol. 211

regularly (3-5 times/week). You should always start lightly and increase gradually. A little pain with exercise may be normal, but exercise should not cause pain that lingers after you have stopped exercising. Exercises for neck or back pain should not cause arm or leg pain. Many of us work hard at our jobs and it may be difficult to think that you should exercise when you get home and are tired from work. However, you should remember that hard work and exercise is not always the same thing. In most situations, we get too much of one type of activity and not enough of another. Many people who work hard all day are stiff and in poor cardiovascular condition. An exercise program should emphasize what you are not getting from work.

Many people have stress due to lifestyle and work habits both mentally and physically. A tense person, more often than not will have a back ache. Flare-ups of back pain frequently occur at the peak or just after periods of increased tension. If you are willing to work on the emotional factors in your life, you may cope better with back pain. Physical stresses from our jobs can include prolonged sitting or standing and it is important to stretch to counteract the positions we find ourselves in consistently.

Smoking has been shown to have a direct relationship to back problems. Smoking restricts circulation and slows down healing when an injury occurs.

It is estimated that in the United States, 97% of the money spent for medical care is directed toward treatment of illness, injury and disability. Only 3% is spent on prevention. It is time to take a look at prevention because many back injuries can be eliminated before they occur. Remember... it is the cumulative effect of poor posture, faulty body mechanics, stressful living and working habits, loss of strength and flexibility and poor physical fitness that causes back problems. These are the risk factors of back injury. Eliminate them as often as possible and you can and will have a healthier back.

Exercise of the Month

Hamstring stretch:

There are many ways to stretch the hamstrings but many people do improper stretching causing stress to the lower back. Proper hamstring stretching is shown below:

1. Lie on your back and clasp your hands behind one thigh. Straighten your leg until a stretch is felt. Hold at least 30 sec.
2. Stand with one heel on a chair and drop your hips back until a stretch is felt in the back of the leg. Do not bend at the waist. Hold at least 30 sec.
3. Sit with one leg extended in front of your body. Sit tall and lean forward at the hips until a stretch is felt in the back of the leg. Do not bend at the waist. Hold at least 30 sec.



Technique 1



Technique 2



Technique 3

mg sodium, 26 g carbs, 3 g fiber, 4 g protein.

Patient Testimonials

Thanks for listening when no one else would.

Thanks for helping to get to the root of my issue. Thanks for everything, you were all wonderful. Heather

I made progress much faster than I anticipated. Thanks so much. Elizabeth

Completely satisfied with all staff at this facility, very professional and courteous. Clinic is very clean and a pleasant atmosphere at all times. Kathy