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Dr. Barbara Rodwin
B.Sc., D.C., D.Acu., A.R.T.
Keri-Lyn Dudgeon
B.Sc.(H.K.)

Trevor Nootenboom R.M.T.,
A.R.T.
Rina McNairn R.M.T.,
A.R.T.
Jeffrey King R.M.T.,
A.R.T.
Danielle Pratt R.M.T.,
A.R.T.
Adrian Das R.M.T., A.R.T.
Sarah Little R.M.T., A.R.T.

Back To Health
240 Catherine St., Suite 100
Ottawa, ON K2P 2G8
Phone: (613) 237-3306

Lower Back Pain



LUMBAR FACET IRRITATION



Reach behind you and feel the centre of your back, just above the buttocks. This is your lumbar spine. Lumbar facet irritation usually is a painful condition affecting the joints. These are responsible for connecting the spine with protection, limiting excessive motion and preventing the vertebrae from locking together.

Patients suffering from lumbar facet irritation usually complain of a well localized low back pain, meaning they can pinpoint the exact site of discomfort. The condition is closely related to lumbar facet syndrome—however,

patients with the latter also feel referred pain in one hip, buttock or upper leg. Facet irritation often precedes facet syndrome, usually if someone had the irritation treated properly. The onset of lumbar facet irritation is often sudden, occurring after a misjudged movement or while recovering from a bent position. These activities may stretch the joint capsules (which protect and support the joints) or jam the facet joints, causing **subluxations** (restricted motion or abnormal positioning) in the spine and painful swelling. Other causes include poor posture, everyday wear-and-tear and trauma to the low back.

Symptoms of facet irritation usually get worse when people sleep on their stomach, work with their arms above their head or rise from a sitting position. All these activities expose the joints to stress that they are not accustomed to, making them more vulnerable to injury and irritation.

Chiropractic is effective for lumbar facet irritation and syndrome. Chiropractors perform a procedure called spinal manipulative therapy, also known as an adjustment, which relieves pain and restores function to misaligned or malfunctioning joints.

Some common causes of stress and strain on the spine are:

- Lifting or exerting incorrectly
- Slouching in chairs
- Driving in a hunched position
- Poor posture
- Sleeping on a sagging mattress

Some Back Pain Statistics

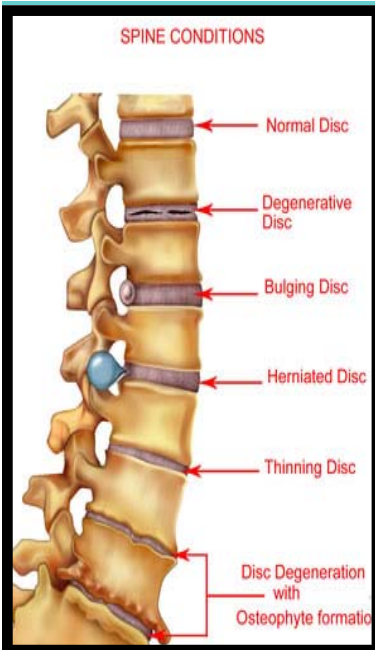
- From 2000 to 2004 WorkSafeBC (Workers' Compensation Board) received over 107,000 claims for back strains.
- Back strains account for just over 25% of all WorkSafeBC (Workers' Compensation Board) claims.
- **Roughly 30% to 40%** of all workplace absences in Canada are due to back pain.
- Back injuries may be caused

by a single instance of overexertion or develop as a result of repeated motion over time. Over two-thirds of back injuries are a result of overexertion.

- **60% to 90% of the population** will experience low back pain in their lifetime.
- More than 90% of lower back pain cases have no

specific cause (such as infection, osteoporosis, arthritis, etc)

- In the health care industry, injuries due to patient handling (lifting, transferring, or repositioning) account for about 35% of all accepted time loss claims and for about 40% of claim costs.



DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE

The intervertebral discs in between each vertebrae provide cushioning and support of the spine. Structurally they are made of strong Collagen connective tissue and water which help to resist against the compressive forces that are involved in our daily life. Trauma, infection, injury or aging sometimes cause the discs to dry out, stiffen or even rupture, resulting in pain as the nerves in the spinal column are exposed or compressed by the

discs. The condition is called **degenerative disc disease (DDD)**.

With age and progression the facet joints of the vertebrae (which allow for movement) become involved as they are forced closer together by compression. Wear and tear is inevitable, pain and discomfort may follow.

If you are suffering from low back pain, especially in the low back or up in your neck and you are over the age of 40 you may

want to talk to your doctor/ chiropractor about having x-rays. As this is the only way to now if there is disc degeneration.

The degenerative process itself cannot be reversed however both massage and chiropractic can help maintain the alignment of the bones and the strength of the muscles in order to maintain joint mobility and stability and prevent further degeneration (halt the process).

- **Acute** if an episode of pain lasts less than 3 months. Most back pain is acute and goes away with 4 to 6 weeks of treatment.
- **Recurrent** if acute symptoms come back. Most people have at least one episode of recurrent low back pain.
- **Chronic** if your back bothers you most of the time for longer than 3 months

Massage Therapy and Low Back Pain

Most people, in their life time, have experienced low back pain. It is one of the most common musculo-skeletal disorders of today's society. Many times, people will suffer through the discomfort, not really knowing that relief is just around the corner! Did you know that the

Canadian Medical Association Journal published a study recently about low back pain and massage therapy? The conclusion was that of the people who completed the study, 63% of the people receiving comprehen-

sive Massage Therapy reported NO PAIN after 1 month. To read more about this study you can go to the Canadian Medical Association Journal web-site and look up the article published in the July 27th, 2000 edition.

Orthotic support for Low Back Pain

Whenever we stand, walk, or run, the lumbar spine and pelvis balance on the legs. If there are leg length inequalities, foot asymmetries, or postural misalignments exist, abnormal forces traveling up the kinematic chain will interfere with spinal (low back) function.

Most low back pain is due to some form of musculoskeletal weakness or failure. A very common source of these problems is imbalances (pronation-shifting inward) at the feet.

The feet make up the postural founda-

tion for the body. Statistical evidence says that at birth most people have perfect feet. By age 20, 80% of humans have developed some type of problem (pronation). By age 40 nearly everyone has some kind of foot condition. Many foot problems eventually contribute to health concerns farther up the kinematic chain, especially generalized back pain.

A major factor in reducing excessive forces on the lumbar spine is often overlooked by health care professionals: the use of external supports (orthotics/heel lifts/metatarsal pads) to decrease external

forces.

Example: If a patient presents with excessive foot pronation/arch collapse, a torque force will produce internal rotation stresses to the leg, hip, pelvis and low back. The result is recurring subluxations and eventual ligament instability affecting the sacro-iliac and lumbar spine joints. These forces can be decrease significantly with the use of semi-rigid, custom made orthotics.