

## Back Pain Fact Sheet

### Incidence

- More than 65 million Americans suffer from low back pain each year.
- Half of all patients who suffer from an episode of low back pain will have a recurrence within a year.<sup>1</sup>
- Back pain is the second most common reason people see a physician and the third most frequent reason for surgery.<sup>2</sup>
- The degenerative process of the spine begins by the age of 30 and plays a significant role in making the spine susceptible to back pain.<sup>3</sup>
- Low back pain affects 4 out of 5 adults during their lifetime.
- 30% of adults over age 30 have degenerative disc disease.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 500,000 spine surgeries are performed annually in the U.S.

### Back Pain & Work

- Back injury accounts for 31.8% of all on-the-job injuries.<sup>5</sup>
- OSHA reports that 1.8 million workers each year suffer from injuries such as low back pain and carpal tunnel syndrome, draining up to \$50 billion from the U.S. economy and costing employers between \$15 billion and \$18 billion in workers' comp expenses.
- Low back pain is the second most frequent reason (after the common cold) that people under the age of 45 miss work.<sup>4</sup>
- Among people with chronic pain, anxiety and depression are common findings.<sup>6</sup>

### Back Pain Treatment

- Studies have shown that inactivity does not give the back a chance to heal but rather weakens the abdominal and back muscles that support the spine, making injury more likely.
- Exercise has been cited as the central element in back pain treatment. It strengthens muscles, keeps blood circulating to heal injured tissues and fluid flowing through the spinal discs.<sup>7</sup>
- Only about 3% of back injuries have some physical problem that can be treated with surgery.<sup>8</sup>
- Patients who underwent treatment at a multidisciplinary pain center reported the following:
  - Identical reductions in pain to those attained from surgery
  - More than 65% discontinued the use of opioid medication post-treatment
  - 65% experienced increased activity post-treatment
  - Significantly fewer surgeries for pain
  - 3 to 6 times less likely to be hospitalized<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> American Association of Neurological Surgeons

<sup>2</sup> National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey III

<sup>3</sup> MayoClinic.com

<sup>4</sup> American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

<sup>5</sup> National Council on Compensation Insurance

<sup>6</sup> Zoidis, John, D. "Managing Chronic Pain." Rehab management. Aug./Sept. 1996. 30-33.

<sup>7</sup> Ebisch, Robert. Who's afraid of back spasms? Sky. October 1998. 34-40.

<sup>8</sup> Meyeroff, Wendy. Fighting back. Rehab management. April/May 1997. 71-76., according to Dr. Hamilton Hall, medical director of the Canadian Back Institute



## Prevention tips

Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous exercise

Wear shock-absorbing shoes and avoid high heels

Pay attention to your posture throughout the day

Sit in a chair that has arm rests and provides good lower back support

Stretch periodically

Lose excess weight, which can place additional stress on the back

Learn to manage stress, which can aggravate back pain

Don't smoke

Take a hot shower or bath to reduce pain

Don't sleep on your stomach, instead sleep on your back or your side with a pillow between your knees

Don't cradle the phone between your head and shoulder