

# Back Pain Facts & Statistics

---

Although doctors of chiropractic treat more than just back pain, a large percentage of chiropractic patients visit their doctor looking for relief from this pervasive condition. In fact, 70 to 85 percent of all people have back pain at some time in their life.

## *A few interesting facts regarding back pain:*

- Low back pain is the fifth most common reason for all physician visits in the United States.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Back pain is the most frequent cause of activity limitation in people younger than 45 years old.<sup>3</sup>
- Most cases of back pain are mechanical or non-organic—meaning they are not caused by serious conditions, such as inflammatory arthritis, infection, fracture or cancer.
- Approximately one quarter of U.S. adults reported having low back pain lasting at least one whole day in the past three months<sup>2</sup>, and 7.6 percent reported at least one episode of severe acute low back pain within a one-year period.<sup>4</sup>
- Low back pain is also very costly: approximately 5 percent of people with back pain disability account for 75 percent of the costs associated with low back pain.<sup>5</sup>
- One-half of all working Americans admit to having back pain symptoms each year.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 2 percent of the U.S. work force is compensated for back injuries each year.<sup>7</sup>
- Americans spend at least \$50 Billion per year on back pain—and that's just for the more easily identified costs.<sup>8</sup>

## **If a person has back pain, what should they do?**

If your back pain is not resolving quickly, visit your doctor of chiropractic. Your pain will often result from mechanical problems that your doctor of chiropractic can address. Many chiropractic patients with relatively long-lasting or recurring back pain feel improvement shortly after starting chiropractic treatment. The relief is often greater after a month of chiropractic treatment than after seeing a family physician.

The chiropractic approach is to find the cause of the pain and treat it directly. This may involve realigning the spine or extremities by chiropractic adjustments, physiotherapy for the muscles and ligaments, rehabilitative exercises, or a combination of these. Sometimes the doctor of chiropractic will suggest exercises or activities to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem. This may provide a long term solution to the condition through prevention.

During the first visit, the doctor of chiropractic will complete a thorough examination that typically includes:

- Patient history
- Physical examination
- Diagnostic studies (when indicated)
- Diagnosis
- Education about the problem and discussion of a chiropractic treatment plan or – if warranted – referral to the appropriate health care specialist

Chiropractic spinal manipulation is proven to be a safe, effective, and affordable treatment option. Chiropractic care reduces pain, restores normal range of motion, and decreases the need for medication.

### **Tips to Prevent Back Pain**

Some back pain is caused by non-preventable factors (traumatic accidents, congenital defects, tumors), but the majority of low back pain is preventable. Suggestions on how you can prevent back pain include:

- Maintain a healthy diet and weight.
- Remain active.
- Avoid prolonged inactivity or bed rest.
- Warm up or stretch before exercising or other physical activities.
- Maintain proper posture.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- Sleep on a mattress of medium firmness to minimize any curve in your spine.
- Lift with your knees, keep the object close to your body, and do not twist when lifting.
- Quit smoking. Smoking impairs blood flow, resulting in oxygen and nutrient deprivation to spinal tissues.
- Work with your doctor of chiropractic to ensure that your workstation is ergonomically correct.

**References:**

1. Hart LG, Deyo RA, Cherkin DC. Physician office visits for low back pain. Frequency, clinical evaluation, and treatment patterns from a U.S. national survey. *Spine*. 1995;20:11-9.
2. Deyo RA, Mirza SK, Martin BI. Back pain prevalence and visit rates: estimates from U.S. national surveys, 2002. *Spine*. 2006;31:2724-7.
3. National Institutes of Health
4. Carey TS, Evans AT, Hadler NM, Lieberman G, Kalsbeek WD, Jackman AM, et al. Acute severe low back pain. A population-based study of prevalence and care-seeking. *Spine*. 1996;21:339-44.
5. Frymoyer JW, Cats-Baril WL. An overview of the incidences and costs of low back pain. *Orthop Clin North Am*. 1991;22:263-71.
6. *Vallfors B. Acute, Subacute and Chronic Low Back Pain: Clinical Symptoms, Absenteeism and Working Environment. Scan J Rehab Med Suppl 1985; 11: 1-98.*
7. Andersson GB. Epidemiological features of chronic low-back pain. *Lancet*. 1999;354:581-5.
8. *This total represents only the more readily identifiable costs for medical care, workers compensation payments and time lost from work. It does not include costs associated with lost personal income due to acquired physical limitation resulting from a back problem and lost employer productivity due to employee medical absence. In Project Briefs: Back Pain Patient Outcomes Assessment Team (BOAT). In MEDTEP Update, Vol. 1 Issue 1, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, Rockville, MD, Summer 1994.*