

NATURAL BALANCE NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2005

Helping bring balance back into your life!

Natural Balance Therapy, P.O. Box 2114, Waukesha, WI 53187-2114

www.naturalbalancetherapy.com ♦ Amy@naturalbalancetherapy.com ♦ 262.893.3246

OH, MY ACHING BACK

Do you have back pain? Well, if you do then you are not alone. According to mayoclinic.com, four out of five adults experiences at least one bout of back pain sometime in their lifetime. Back injuries are the leading cause of work related disability. Fortunately, most occurrences of low back pain only last a few days, but others last longer and are more severe. You don't have to live with back pain for the rest of your life and I hope that through education you can learn how to manage your pain.

Your back (spine) is made up of 30 small bones called vertebrae. These vertebrae create a bony canal that protects your spinal cord. You have nerves that enter and exit the spinal cord through the vertebrae. Tendons, muscles, and ligaments hold your vertebrae together. Between each vertebra you have intervertebral disks that act as "shock absorbers". Most of our weight and stress is placed on the lower back and is the site of most back pain.

Back pain can be caused by trauma or injury, degenerative conditions, osteoporosis, or congenital abnormalities in the spine. As we age, our bone strength and muscle elasticity decreases. Our discs begin to lose fluid and flexibility and their ability to provide a cushion between the vertebrae. So, it is very important to take care of ourselves through preventative measures (exercise, smoking cessation, massage, chiropractic, etc..) when you are young, middle age, and elderly. You are never too young or old to start taking care of your back.

Certain factors can increase your risk to develop back pain. These include: obesity, smoking, pregnancy, poor physical condition, stress, poor

posture, and poor sleeping positions.

There are many things that you can do to help prevent back pain from occurring or reoccurring.

1. Get regular massage or bodywork sessions to keep muscles loose and to help improve flexibility.
2. Stretch daily
3. Keep your pelvis balanced – 90% of us have an imbalance through our pelvis and don't know it. I can help by assessing your pelvis during treatment and issuing pelvic balancing exercises.
4. Use proper body mechanics during lifting and daily activities.
5. Exercise regularly.
6. Lose weight if you are obese. Obesity can cause a lot of strain on your back region.
7. Quit smoking.
8. Learn how to manage and decrease your stress through meditation, exercise, or relaxation techniques.

Most back pain will disappear with home treatment and self care (ice during first 48 hours, ibuprofen, light stretching, and light activity). If you have not noticed any relief within the first 72 hours of self-care see your physician. See your physician immediately if your back pain:

1. Causes numbness, tingling or weakness in leg(s).
2. Causes new bowel or bladder problems.
3. If you notice abdominal pain.
4. Is accompanied with unexplained weight loss or fever.
5. Is a result of a fall or blow to your back.
6. Keeps you awake at night.

Look for more back information in this newsletter.

Tips for a Healthy Back

Here are some everyday tips to help you maintain a healthy back.

1. **Increase your physical activity.** Daily modest physical activity is the key to preventing and recovering from back injury. Walk 20 – 30 minutes each day to keep physically active.
2. **Posture, Posture, Posture.** Do you remember your mom telling you to sit up straight? Well, she was right, but you don't want to sit up so straight that you increase the low back curvature. Don't slouch while sitting and standing. You want to naturally maintain the curves in your back.
3. **Become a side sleeper.** Sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees will help reduce the strain on your back. Stomach sleeping actually causes the most strain on the back. Always sleep on a firm surface.
4. **Warm-up and cool-down.** Always warm-up and cool-down for 10-15 minutes when active. This includes recreational activities, yard work, and lifting. Warm-up and cool-down includes walking for 5 minutes and then light stretching.
5. **Use ergonomics at home.** Make sure that your work and home workstations are at a comfortable height for you. If you have any questions on your current set-up let me know.
6. **What is it with those heels?** Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
7. **Are you a smoker?** If you smoke, quit. Read the smoking facts in the tip box to the right.
8. **Should I lift that?** Always check the weight of an object prior to lifting and don't lift objects that are too heavy for you. Always lift with your knees, keep your back straight, don't twist, and keep the weight close to your body.
9. **Keep a healthy weight.** Excessive weight in the abdominal region fatigues your lower

back muscles and can put excessive strain on the back and pelvis.

10. **Rotate positions.** Switch positions frequently by periodically walking around or gently stretching your muscles to relieve back tension. Prolonged standing and sitting in one position can increase tension on the body. So, get up and move around.
11. **Lumbar support.** Sit in a chair with good lumbar support. Make sure that your chair is at the proper height for the tasks at hand.

Use these tips everyday to help maintain a healthy back.

Sources: ninds.nih.gov
www.mayoclinic.org

Smoking and Back Pain Facts

- Smokers are up to 2.7 times more likely to develop low back pain compared to non-smokers.
- Women smokers are more likely to develop low back pain than men who smoke.
- Smoking is also blamed for the decay of spinal disks
- Smokers heal at a slower rate than non-smokers.
- Due to decreased nutrition and blood supply, smokers have a greater risk of fracturing hips, wrists, and spine.

Self Treatment for your Back

All of us are waiting for the warmer weather so we can get outside and do yard work, play recreation sports, or play with the kids. Back pain will stop you in your tracks so it is important to learn ways to treat yourself at home. If you can apply self treatment techniques immediately after your initial onset of back symptoms then you may be able to minimize or completely resolve your symptoms.

When you injure your back or feel that first twinge it is important to put ice on immediately. Always use ice for the **first 48 hours** after the initial onset of symptoms. Ice works by helping decrease inflammation and pain. Apply an ice pack for 15 minutes, 3-5 times per day for the first 48 hours. After the initial 48 hours then you can apply heat to help decrease any stiffness in your back and to increase blood flow. Apply a hot pack for 15-20 minutes, 3-5 times per day. Heat should be used before exercise and/or stretching.

After we injure our back the first thing that we

want to do is lie on the couch or in bed. Actually, bed rest is not a good idea. Try to resume normal activities as soon as possible and try to keep up activities that aren't painful. When you keep moving then you decrease the risk of stiffness and deconditioning.

You can take over the counter medication, but you will want to check with your physician prior to taking any medications.

One of the most effective ways to speed recovery from back pain is to perform exercises. Low impact exercises such as swimming, walking, and biking are great ways to improve coordination, posture and muscle balance. Performing specific exercises to help strengthen the back and abdominal muscles as well as stretching can help speed up the healing process.

Call me today at 262-893-3246 to get on your own back care program.

SCIATICA

All of us have heard the term sciatica or maybe have even experienced the pain associated with sciatica.

Sciatica is a severe pain in the leg caused from compression or irritation of the sciatic nerve. Each of the two sciatic nerves are formed by four or five nerves branching off each side of the spinal cord and running down the back of each leg. They are the largest (and longest) nerves of the body. When these nerves are irritated or affected by the inflammation of nearby soft tissues, medical professionals refer to this as sciatica.

Common causes of sciatic leg pain are vertebral subluxation, bulging or herniated disc, or degenerative changes. These can put pressure on the sciatic nerve roots as they leave the spinal cord.

The result can be intense pain shooting down either or both legs.

Treatments for sciatica can include manual therapies like massage therapy to decrease soft tissue tightness in the back, pelvis, and lower extremities. Chiropractic care has also proven to be very beneficial to reduce nerve irritation and its associated pain. Anti-inflammatory and pain medications can be used as needed, but consult your physician prior to taking medication.

Most cases of sciatica will resolve on their own with conservative treatments. Read the tips and self treatment sections in this newsletter for more information.

Sources: www.medinfo.co.uk
www.spine-health.com

NBT HAPPENINGS

Natural Balance Therapy is now conveniently located in Mukwonago and Waukesha. The Mukwonago location is at Spencer-Smith Perugini Chiropractic. We are going to be moving into a new office building on March 2nd. This is a very exciting time and I am really looking forward to this new opportunity. This new location gives me the chance to offer my services to a wider range of clientele, which allows me to help more people reduce their pain while improving their function. I will continue to have hours in the Waukesha location two to three times per week.

For the past two years I have provided massages at BMW motorcycle rallies in Money Creek, MN and Wisconsin Dells, WI. Along with these rallies, I am going to be setting up a massage booth at the BMW International Rally in Lima, OH this year. These events are a lot of fun because you get to meet so many different people.

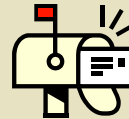
These are just a few of the happenings at NBT. I hope that you are looking forward to spring. I am very excited to see you in 2005.

DISCOUNTS

Referral Program: Every time you refer a new client, receive \$5 off your next session. Just have your friend mention your name when they get their massage and I will take \$5 off your next visit.

Volume Massage Discounts: Purchase 3, 5, or 10 massages and get a discounted rate.

Testimonial Discount: Send me a testimonial and receive 10% off your next visit. (Limited to one discount per person).



FEEDBACK!

Do you have questions or suggestions? I would like to hear from you. Send me your questions, suggestions, recipes, ideas, or anything that you would like.

Call or write to:

Phone: 262.893.3246

E-mail: amy@naturalbalancetherapy.com

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