



# Live Well, Work Well

According to the American Chiropractic Association, 50 percent of all working Americans experience back pain each year.

## BACK PAIN: RISK FACTORS AND CAUSES

Back pain can range from a dull, constant ache to a sudden, sharp pain that causes incapacitation. It can come on suddenly—from an accident, a fall or lifting something too heavy—or it can develop slowly, perhaps as the result of age-related changes to the spine.

### Risk Factors and Causes

Anyone can experience back pain. There are risk factors that can increase the chances of developing acute or chronic back pain:

- Age – Back pain becomes more common with older age.
- Fitness level – Back pain is more likely among people who are not physically fit, as a weak back and abdominal muscles may not properly support the spine. Additionally, “weekend warriors” who go out and exercise a lot after being inactive all week are more likely to suffer painful back injuries than people who make moderate physical activity a daily habit.
- Diet – A diet high in calories and fat, combined with an inactive lifestyle, can lead to obesity, which puts additional stress on the back.
- Heredity – Some causes of back pain, including disc disease, may have a genetic component.
- Race – Race can be a factor in back problems. African-American women, for example, are more likely to develop spondylolisthesis, a condition in which a vertebra of the lower spine—also called the lumbar spine—slips out of place.
- Disease – Many diseases can cause or contribute to back pain, including various forms of arthritis and cancer elsewhere in the body that may spread to the spine.

- Occupation – Having a job that requires heavy lifting, pushing or pulling, particularly when it includes twisting or vibrating of the spine, can lead to injury and back pain. An inactive job or a desk job may also lead to or contribute to pain, especially if one has poor posture or has to sit all day in an uncomfortable chair.
- Smoking – Smoking can lead to back pain by blocking the body’s ability to deliver nutrients to the discs of the lower back, as well as by straining muscles caused by repeated coughing associated with heavy smoking. In addition, smoking slows healing and prolongs pain for people who have had a back injury, back surgery or broken bones.

Understanding the causes associated with the development of back pain are the first steps for prevention and effective treatment.



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