

Low Back Pain: A Modern Epidemic

By Dr. Chuck Fulanovich



Let's face it. Chronic low back pain and sciatica isn't much fun. It can take you right out of the game. Things you take for granted like going for a walk or run, playing a round of golf or a few sets of tennis, putting in a full day at work, doing routine household chores.... all become an increasingly difficult challenge because of the pain.

And you're not alone. Millions of Americans suffer from symptoms caused by bulged, herniated or degenerated discs. In fact, it's been estimated that nearly 60 percent of adults over the age of 45 have some

evidence of disc bulge or herniation as seen on MRI.

Low back pain is the second most common reason for a visit to the doctor right behind upper respiratory infections. It costs Americans nearly a billion dollars a year for chronic low back pain-related healthcare and when you add a neuropathic component (sciatica) the annual cost of care per patient is 160 percent higher.

Recent studies have shown that surgery for chronic low back pain has a greater than 40 percent fail rate (some estimate as high as 60 percent) and can have a number of serious consequences including nerve damage, weakening of physical structures and dependence on addictive drugs. Epidural injections for disc related sciatica and spinal stenosis have proven to be ineffective over the long term.

Non-surgical and non-drug related options for treatment of disc related low back pain are gaining increased popularity among the medical community and chronic pain sufferers.

At the forefront of these options is non-surgical spinal decompression therapy. Developed by Canadian physical medicine specialists and a team of biomechanical engineers, this technology uses a computer controlled algorithm to target the affected discs while gently and painlessly decompressing spinal joints in a sequenced pattern.

This action creates a negative pressure inside the disc that acts like a vacuum and draws fluid and nutrients into the disc itself and pulls

bulged material off sensitive nerve tissue resulting in the reduction or elimination of pain.

Results can vary but recent studies have shown up to an 86 percent long term success rate with this non-invasive procedure. Good candidates for this protocol are determined by thorough physical examination and MRI findings.



The best option though is to keep yourself in good shape and avoid the problem altogether. Maintain a healthy weight, get regular exercise, work on core strength and warm up before exercise or any physical activity. Pay attention to your posture, sleep on a good, medium firm mattress and watch how you lift, keeping heavy objects close to your body.

Dr. Chuck Fulanovich is the founder of Palo Alto SpineMED and specializes in spinal decompression therapy. Any questions? Visit www.paloaltospinemed.com or call 650-328-2104.