



WHEN BACKS ATTACK

- DR. SARGON BENJAMIN ODISHO -

- ▶ **NO ONE IS EVER IMMUNE TO SUDDENLY "THROWING OUT THEIR BACKS". I'VE HAD JUST AS MANY BODY BUILDERS AS BAR BUMS CRAWL INTO MY OFFICE WITH SOME TYPE OF LOW BACK COMPLAINT. NO MATTER THE METHOD THE TREATMENT, FOR THE MOST PART, REMAINS THE SAME. HERE'S SOME INSIGHT ON WHAT CAUSES LOW BACK PAIN, HOW IT CAN BE NATURALLY TREATED, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT FUTURE ATTACKS**

The most common cause of sudden low back pain is a sprain/strain of the back muscles and ligaments. Common symptoms include varying degrees of localized pain and decrease range of motion. Patients that complain of pain radiating into their backside or down into their legs (sciatica) is due to an impingement of the nerves that supply the lower extremities. Out of all the things that could be putting pressure on the nerves, vertebral discs are the usual suspects. These are little shock absorbers located between each vertebrae that can push or pop (bulge or herniated) out of place. Other causes for back pain are scary things like fractures or dislocations whose symptoms I'm sure you won't miss.

The counter-attack is to reduce pain, increase mobility, and correct the problem. I usually go the extra mile with my patients and add preventative stretches and exercises. It may not feel like it, but light movement rather than rest is the key to getting better and therefore encouraged. Aside from the ice pack, back brace, and outdated pamphlets on "lifting with your knees" most doctors' offices now offer other modalities that can quickly take the edge off. Modalities like muscle stimulation, ultrasound, acupuncture, and a technique called kinesiotaping are often used to reduce pain and swelling (and this is an ideal time to get your chiropractic adjustment).

The information gathered from a thorough patient history and orthopedic examination is all I pretty much need (O.K. maybe an MRI from time-to-time) to determine if a patient's disc condition can be treated conservatively. The natural approach to treating uncomplicated disc problems involves traction, flexion/distraction, and/or decompression therapies. All these are either manual or mechanical treatments that are utilized to take the impinging pressure off the nerves. The simple explanation is that these therapies increase the space between two vertebrae so that the disc and nerves between them have a little more "breathing room".

Popping painkillers and pray is always an option, but certain symptoms should be red-flags that your body needs help. Symptoms like loss of sensation in either or both legs, the inability to rotate or flex at the low back, or any bowel/bladder changes means you need to see a physician immediately. Repetitive back injuries, persistent pain, fevers, or any other unusual symptoms not mentioned above also need to be addressed before you hit the gym, stage, or whatever.

Finally, here are some preventative measures that will keep you out of my office. First, it's all in the warm-up. Obviously, you want to start with the muscles of the low back but don't ignore the hamstrings and piriformis.



Tightening of these leg muscles can put extra strain on your low back and contribute to the pain. And treat everything as an athletic event. Pick-up games, long trips, or just shakin' it on the dance floor can all end in you sprawled out and crying on the bedroom floor for a couple of days. A better guarantee would be to incorporate some core-stabilizing exercises into your daily routine. Don't know any? Check out our website at www.gcowellness.com for great core exercises and additional hints. There are also some helpful hints on how to manage back pain at home, prevent injuries at work or on the road, and brief explanations of the therapies mentioned above.

Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.

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