

evolve

The Body Dynamics Monthly Newsletter

Personal Health Care Reform, Part II: Who you gonna call for YOUR low back pain?

Q: How does a consumer with low back pain make an evidence-informed decision among the over 200 different medications, therapies, injections, products, and procedures available for treatment?

A: The latest clinical guidelines from the *Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons* (Feb 2009) as well as the *American College of Physicians and the American Pain Society* (Jul 2007) affirms that following self-care, physical therapy combined with anti-inflammatory medications is the most effective treatment for the majority of cases.

Millions of people suffer from low back pain each year and it is the #1 reason people miss work in the US. Approximately 75% to 85% of adults will be affected by this condition at some point during their life, and the cost of this care is estimated to be a staggering \$90 billion dollars per year. This includes money spent on diagnostics such as x-rays and MRI's (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and treatment including medications and surgery.

Pain medications are a very common first treatment for low back pain, but

this only masks the symptoms rather than address the cause of the pain. This course of treatment is not free of risk or 100% safe as many people can become reliant on pain medications. Over 100,000 people per year are hospitalized from complications associated with the use of common over the counter pain medications, with over 16,000 deaths. In 2003, complications arising from NSAID use were the 13th most common cause of death in the United States. This rate is higher than that found from cervical cancer, asthma or malignant melanoma.

The other common treatment for back pain, spinal surgery, is not always the quick fix we wish it would be and it does not necessarily address the movement problem causing or contributing to one's back pain. This is not a risk free treatment either. There are thousands of people who die each year from complications arising from spinal surgery and up to 50% of spinal surgery patients have partial or no relief of their symptoms.

The *Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons* published a study in February 2009 that examined people with symptomatic low back pain arising

from lumbar degenerative disc disease, a common cause of back pain. Symptomatic lumbar degenerative disc disease develops when a disc weakens (often due to repetitive strain), is injured, or deteriorates from aging. As a result, the disc is unable to hold the vertebrae as it should and the lack of stability can cause back pain.



85% of adults are affected by Low Back Pain. Physical Therapy is one of the most effective treatments available.

Different treatment methods were detailed including surgery, medication and physical therapy with the use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as



Thanks to direct access, it is possible to see the PT of your choice without a doctor's referral.

over the counter medications aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen. The study affirms that physical therapy with NSAIDS is the cornerstone of non-surgical treatment and that in 90% of patients with low back pain, symptoms will resolve without surgical intervention.

Thus, barring an emergency, the initial treatment should be noninvasive. Physical therapy is the safer option.

Current estimates suggest that 90-97 percent of all low back/leg pain is caused by dysfunction of either the spinal joints or muscles, or both. Your physical therapy should consist of a thorough history, postural evaluation, range of motion, strength measurements, and assessment of habitual movement patterns. At Body Dynamics, we will provide you with a thorough physical therapy evaluation, and develop a specific plan of care to maximize your treatment outcomes. Your treatment may include moving joints in specific directions and at different speeds to regain movement, specific soft tissue techniques, muscle stretching and strengthening, body mechanics and core stabilization exercises.

In Virginia, you have the right to choose who you see for physical therapy and you can see your physical therapist without first having to see your physician. This direct access allows you to seek treatment for your condition today, get better faster, spend less money, feel great and return to the activities you enjoy. See your physical therapist at Body Dynamics right away for your low back pain (and many other muscle and joint pain issues as well).



With the proper help, freedom from low back pain is possible.