

## Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic

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### Back Pain Management

Do you have lower back pain? If so you are not alone. Nearly all of us at some point have back pain that may interfere with work, recreation or simple daily activities.

Back Pain Facts:

- a. Americans spend \$50 billion each year on treatment for back pain.
- b. Lower back pain is the number one cause for job-related disability and the leading contributor to missed work.
- c. Back pain is the second most common neurological ailment, number one is the headache.
- d. *Acute* or short-term low back pain generally lasts from a few days to a few weeks. (usually mechanical in nature)
- e. *Chronic* back pain is measured by duration; pain that persists for more than 3 months is considered chronic. It is often progressive and the cause can be difficult to diagnose.

#### Some causes for Back Pain?

As we age, bone strength, muscle elasticity and tone tend to decrease. The discs begin to lose fluid and flexibility, which decrease the ability to cushion the vertebrae. Back pain can result due to *Bulging disc*, (also called *protruding, herniated, or ruptured disc*), *Sciatica* (a condition in which a herniated or ruptured disc presses on the sciatic nerve), *Spinal stenosis*, *Osteoporosis* and *Skeletal irregularities*.

*Fibromyalgia* and *Spondylitis* are also related to back pain. Back pain may be diagnosed by a clinical evaluation. However, some diagnostic tests can be done such as: *X-ray imaging*, *Discography*, *Computerized Tomography*, *Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)* and electro diagnostic procedures, which include *Electromyography (EMG)*, *Bone scans* and *Ultrasound imaging*.

Treatment options in bio-medicine may include; medication and/or invasive surgical procedures which are often accompanied by unpleasant side effects. Often there is an increased in pain months after the surgical procedure due to the formation of scar tissue.

*A recent survey indicates that back surgery is one of the top ten "overly performed" surgical procedures in the United States. The surgery can cost up to \$20,000 before adding the physician fee. One clinical study showed that conservative treatments for Back Pain had the same level of improvement as surgical treatments within a two year period. Astonishing considering the monetary, physical and emotional price paid for surgery!*

### **Traditional Chinese Medicine & Back Pain**

*Tradition Chinese Medicine (TCM) believes that if there is blockage there will be pain. Clearing the blockage releases the pain.*

#### **Lumbar Back Pain due to injury**

When the lumbar area is injured, either by acute or chronic factors, two main meridians that control this area are blocked so energy and blood cannot circulate freely. The treatment principle is to release pain by reopening or unblocking this area in order to ensure circulation. **Acupuncture treatment for lumbar pain has been proven as one of the most effective ways for pain management without side effects.** Acupuncture treatment can be used with or without electric stimulation and is often combined with gentle acupressure and an external herbal ointment.

**\*\* Many major insurance companies & workers compensation packages are recognizing the beneficial effects of Acupuncture treatments and now cover the TCM related services. \*\***

*Many cases of lumbar pain are not injury related but are the result of internal disharmony!*

#### **Lumbar Back Pain due to Kidney deficiency**

The lumbar area is the house for the Kidneys. When kidney energy is deficient, people may feel weakness of the lower back and knees. They will feel easily fatigued, experience sexual dysfunction and may exhibit bone structural problems. Disorders caused by kidney deficiency may be old age, chronic fatigue syndrome or other chronic physical conditions that may include osteoarthritis or degenerative diseases.

In addition to treating the lumbar pain with Acupuncture, Herbal formulas should be used to strengthen the weak organ. Lumbar pain caused by internal organ conditions take longer to treat than pain from an injury but typically Acupuncture in combination with Herbal treatments create greater long term, pain free results.

#### **Lumbar pain from stress**

Lumbar pain from sitting too long or from stress is often due to blood stagnation. For this condition, **acupuncture for stress reduction is recommended along with acupuncture for pain management combined with cupping and acupressure massage.**

Although there are many contributing factors to lumbar pain, each individual case can be caused by any combination of factors. TCM treatment should be considered not only for treating the pain, but also the underlying condition as well. Throughout my years of practice I am still amazed to see the number of unnecessary invasive medical procedures performed on my patients that in fact lead to increased pain and suffering.

Traditional Chinese Medical Clinic advises all patients to ask for complete explanations for the cause of lower back pain, how the treatment will relate to the cause as well as what side effects the treatment will incur.

**TCM Tips to prevent lower back pain:**

1. **Exercise:** Tai Ji and Qi Gong to strengthen and relax the body and lower back. Yoga and stretching exercises are good for lower back pain related to stress and muscle tension.
2. **Chinese Farmer Squat (CFS):** To perform this, simply lower yourself into a squat with both feet parallel to each other and about two to three inches apart. Make sure your feet are totally flat against the floor and wrap your arms around your knees. This will open up and stretch the lower back area.
3. **Diet therapy:** For certain patients with chronic back pain and that know weakness/pain is related to weak internal organs or too much cold & phlegm in the body, TCM food therapy can be a part of the treatment to assist in the prevention of lower back pain.
4. **Hot herbal bath and massage:** To prevent and assist in alleviating back pain, especially for people who have arthritis, poor circulation and muscle spasm.

*Please call Dr. Helen H. Hu for an immediate consultation!*

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