

CottageHouseCall

Galesburg Cottage Hospital • 695 N. Kellogg St. • Galesburg, IL 61401 • 309-343-8131

Issue 17 • Page 1



By: Sean Kane,
M.D.



Managing Back Pain

Anyone who's ever suffered from back pain knows it can be debilitating – making even simple tasks such as carrying groceries or climbing stairs seem nearly impossible. With four out of five adults experiencing back pain during their lives, it is one of the leading causes of missed work and lost productivity. In fact, Americans spend more than \$100 billion to treat back pain each year.

While back pain is often caused by strained muscles and ligaments that occur from heavy or improper lifting, other common causes include:

- Disc problems – As many people age, the intervertebral discs in the spinal column began to break down and lose their cushioning ability, resulting in severe pain. Ruptured or herniated discs can have the same effect when disc matter pinches the surrounding nerves.
- Injuries – Injuries sustained in car accidents or falls can result in fractured vertebrae. Osteoporosis, a condition which weakens the bones, can also result in painful fractures.
- Conditions and diseases – Scoliosis, which causes curvature of the spine, and various forms of arthritis including osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are also common causes of back pain.

Though physical activity was once thought to worsen back pain, most doctors now recommend skipping prolonged bed rest in favor of light activity, which may speed healing.

For those with intense or chronic back pain, it may become necessary to investigate other treatment options such as prescription pain medication or physical therapy. Injections of cortisone, an anti-inflammatory medication, may also be helpful for those suffering from back and leg pain due to a disc problem.

Back pain can be debilitating, however most aches and pains improve within a few weeks. Patients should seek immediate medical attention if back pain:

- Becomes constant or severe – especially when lying down;
- Spreads down one or both legs or causes weakness or tingling;
- Results in new bladder or bowel problems;
- Is associated with abdominal pain, fever or unexpected weight loss.

Regular, low-impact activities such as swimming or walking combined with core strengthening exercises can increase strength, endurance and flexibility. Maintaining a healthy weight can also prevent back pain as extra pounds can add strain to back muscles.

Ask your doctor if managing your pain through the Cottage Pain Clinic is an option for you.

For more medical articles by local physicians visit our website at cottagehospital.com. We hope this issue of CottageHouseCall has been helpful to you. Please call again.