

BACKACHE

The bane of the back

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Living in the 21st century has its pleasures and pains. While people are leading longer more comfortable lives, a variety of ailments related to lifestyle have reared their heads.

Principal among them is a "Backache", a problem that affects a large majority of the adults. All of us have experienced this problem at least once in our lifetime, it ranges from a simple strains or muscle pulls, to sprains or even major disc lesion (slip disc).

CAUSES

The reasons are many - from *incorrect sitting postures to major accidents*. The commonest causes are lifting weights in awkward angles, riding two wheelers on bumpy roads, incorrect start of exercises, sitting / sleeping posture, wrong types of mattresses, lifestyle, chronic constipation or a fall etc. These may cause a backache or may be a factor in increasing an existing disc lesion.

TYPES

Types of backache may be varying from a short span of stiffness and pain, to chronic continuous intense pain that interferes with day-to-day activities. The pain may be radiating (spread out) or localized (in one place). It may be in the lower back area radiating to the legs (sciatica), or located in the neck radiating to the hands. It might be an inter-vertebral disc bulge, herniation, and prolapse.

TREATMENT

The treatment for different stages of backaches vary from absolute bed rest for a few weeks to simple applications of muscle relaxants, pain relief gels, oils, and pain killer tablets to tractions, and epidural injectables to surgeries.



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If it is a simple stage of sprain, muscle pull or strain, it is better that the person be on bed rest for some time along

with the pain killers and some analgesic applications. But bed rest also can be a problem in the long run as the lower back muscles can become weak as it is not subjected to exercise for quite some time. Later on, that in itself can become a cause for sore back. So it is a very delicate balance to handle such patients and to decide how to reduce the pain as well as save the strength of the muscles.



If the patient does not respond to the bed rest and analgesics, what is done in general is to undergo **physiotherapy** for a few days which may assist in the reduction of pain.

If the pain is still not under control then, by MRI investigation the stage of the vertebral column and the inter vertebral discs are assessed and treatment is suggested which might be in the form of traction for some days depending on the intensity of the problem or some surgeons choose to give epidural injectables to control the pain.

Lastly surgery might also be an option which is considerably increasing nowadays. But is it an answer and not a permanent solution. In my experience, the percentage of the problem solved varies and the recurrence rate is also quite high.

So what is the answer for this problem? Everything is right is its own way, but my personal advice would be to look into many other systems of medicines as every system has its own answer for the problem and surgery is not the only option.

I particularly want to highlight the methodology adapted in handling backache including Slip disc and various types of inter vertebral disc lesions like that in **Ayurveda, which is a 5000-year-old system of medicine.**

We have worked on more than thousand cases of the same and Ayurveda has proved to be one of the **best non invasive treatments for various types of backache** including slip disc. It is also been observed that the treatment through Ayurveda followed by the yoga therapy works out to be a wonderful combination for the treatment of backache and neck pain including cervical and lumbar spondylosis.

There would be certain do's and don'ts that if followed can give great relief from the problem and also avoid its recurrence. In certain stages some of the alternate therapies like acupuncture, reiki etc might be helpful.

Recurrence of backache is a very important factor. The backache caused due to muscle pull, posture defects etc might be corrected and the recurrence may be avoided by correcting the same. But if it is a disc lesion, the recurrence is not completely stopped even by surgery, and the repeat surgery in the same region is not advisable. It is better to **try out all other non-surgical and non-invasive methods** of handling your backache before opting for the surgery.

Preventive lifestyle, light exercises, posture corrections, high fiber diet, regular massages/oil applications with good herbal oils, meditation etc might be a good recipe for handling your backache. ■

