

Tips On How To Avoid Surgery For Lower Back Pain

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I hope I have gotten my point across the last two weeks. I am an Orthopaedic Surgeon who does back surgery. I am also very conservative about who I operate on for the reasons I mentioned before. *Everyone who has back pain is not a candidate for surgery.* There is too much back surgery being done because of the explosion of metal implants available to treat it and surgeons pushing the envelope so to speak. The indications of who should have back surgery have been expanded greatly by surgeons.

Find ten people who have had back surgery and ten who have had total hip replacement and ask how they are doing. That will make my point.

Simplest Treatment

In our greatly respected Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons there was a very recent article on back pain. Physical therapy and anti-inflammatory medication combined will result in marked improvement in 90% of patients with low back pain in three months. Most will be much better in six weeks. These were the main points in the article.

To repeat it is well established, that most lower back pain resolves without surgery. That does mean you don't have to do anything.

Strategy of Treatment

In the great majority of cases your history, physical exam and plain x-rays will not reveal anything alarming. In other words you appear not to need urgent or invasive treatment. We will try to work with you to reduce or eliminate low back pain, return you to a good level of function and prevent pain and injury in the future.

1. Proper Body Mechanics

Education and training in proper body mechanics and posture are of extreme importance for back pain relief over the long term. You probably will need to relearn how to do activities such as lifting, carrying and even sitting.

2. Stay Active, Modify Activities

You may not be able to run or do other sports, but you must walk, ride a bike and swim if able. Babying your back can cause deconditioning and loss of strength.

3. Attain and Maintain Normal Weight

Easy to write it, but very hard to do. However, loss of excess weight relieves low back pressure and overall joint pain.

4. Anti-inflammatory

The body produces its own anti-inflammatory substances called endorphins in response to activity. Ibuprofen can supplement the body's natural anti-inflammatories.

5. Investigate Other Pain Relievers

Temporary relief can come from Tylenol, muscle relaxants, other mild pain relievers and possibly an injection locally in a painful area.

6. TENS

Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (a mouthful!) has proven to be safe and effective. It involves placement of electrodes on the skin, which can control pain. A prescription taken to a physical therapist is needed to get this treatment started.

I really hope this will help you to think more clearly about your back trouble and what is available to treat it. Good luck and think conservative.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are October 16, and October 30, 2009.

Please don't forget there is a wealth of accurate information about all the Orthopaedic conditions I treat on the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Please log on and check it out.

We are happy to answer questions from readers. You can e-mail me at orthopodsurgeon@hotmail.com or write to me at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan 48801.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush