

## **Backache**



### **Symptoms**

In most cases of backache, the pain is usually felt either in the middle of the back or lower down. It may spread to both sides of the waist and the hips. With acute pain, the patient is unable to move and is bedridden.

About 90 per cent of backache patients suffer from what is called cervical or lumbar spondylosis. It is a degenerative disorder in which the vertebral bone or the intervertebral disc becomes soft and loses shape. As a result of this, the spine loses its flexibility.

### **Treatment**

Drugs prescribed to relieve pain or relax muscles in backache disorders do not cure common back problems. These can become habit forming and may actually perpetuate the disease in case of excessive intake.

Certain safety measures, especially, for people in sedentary occupation, are necessary to relieve and prevent backache. The most important of these is exercise which improves the supply of nutrients to spinal discs, thereby delaying the process of deterioration that comes with age and eventually affects everybody. Safe exercises include walking, swimming and bicycling. The latter should be done keeping the back upright. Controlling one's weight is another important step towards relieving backache as excess weight greatly increases the stress on soft back tissues.

Those with sedentary occupations should take a break to stand up every hour. Soft cushioned seats should be avoided and position should be changed as often as possible. Persons with back problems should sleep on a firm mattress on their sides with knees bent at right angles to the torso. They should take care never to bend from the waist down to lift any object but instead should squat close

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to the object, bending the knees but keeping the back straight, and then stand up slowly.

Neck tension arising from long hours at the desk or behind the wheel of the car can be relieved by certain neck exercises. These include rotating the head clockwise and anticlockwise, allowing the head to drop forward and backward as far as possible and turning the head to the right and left as far as possible several times. These exercises help to loosen up contracted neck muscles which may restrict the blood supply to the head.

The diet of those suffering from backache should consist of a salad of raw vegetables such as tomato, carrot, cabbage, cucumber, radish, lettuce and at least two steamed or lightly cooked vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage, carrot, spinach and plenty of fruits, all except bananas. The patients should have four meals daily. They may take fruits and milk during breakfast, steamed vegetables and whole wheat chapatis during lunch, fresh fruits or fruit juice in the evening and a bowl of raw salad and sprouts during dinner.

The patients should avoid fatty, spicy, and fried foods, curd, sweetmeats, sugar, condiments as well as tea and coffee. Those who smoke and take tobacco in any form should give them up completely.

Proteins and vitamin C are necessary for the development of a healthy bone matrix. Vitamin D, calcium, phosphorous and the essential trace minerals are essential for healthy bones. Foods that have been processed for storage to avoid spoiling have few nutrients and should be eliminated from the diet. Vitamin C has proved helpful in relieving low-back pain and averting spinal disc operations.

Hot fomentations, alternate sponging or application of radiant heat to the back will also give immediate relief. Yogic asanas which are beneficial in the treatment of backache are bhujangasana, shalabhasana, halasana, uttanpadasana and shavasana. The back can be strengthened through proper nutrition, exercise and relaxation and in the process general health will also improve.

**Reference**

Shri H.K. Bakhru. (1999). Natures Cure.

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