CONQUERING BACK PAIN

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO REDUCING OR ELIMINATING CHRONIC BACK PAIN

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CHAPTER 01: THE REASONS FOR BACK PAIN

When we’re young we often take our good health for granted and never think about the risks of developing back pain. But the truth is that back pain can strike us at any age, but usually for different reasons. Kids will typically experience back pains if they have suffered some kind of sports injury or an injury from playing too aggressively outside.

It is very rare that you’ll find a child who suffers from chronic back pain or acute back pain. These pains are typically found in people over 60-years-old. The main reason older people suffer from back pain the most is because their spinal joints have degenerated over time. These are the discs that exist between the bones which act as a cushion for them.

Once this cushion is worn out, the structural integrity of the bones are compromised and results in feelings of pain for the person. If this degeneration is not treated or prevented early enough then it could even lead to spinal stenosis or osteoarthritis.

You can treat back pain by focusing on the risk factors that contribute to it and the risk factors that you have the power to change. As a result, the other risk factors which you have no power over will be a little bit easier to deal with.
Risk Factors That Cannot Be Changed

Age is a risk factor for back pain that cannot be changed. We are all going to get old someday and there is no way around that. It doesn’t even matter if you’ve had any previous injuries or not.

Eventually, your bones will lose strength and density, causing very serious back pain. The most common type of back pain like this is osteoporosis.

Once the vertebrae end up weakening from osteoporosis, they could easily get fractured at some point in the near future. If you ever see older people who look hunched over with a rounding back then they likely have fractured vertebrae brought on by osteoporosis.

There is a common misconception that men experience more back pain than women do. But this is merely a myth because studies have shown that men and women are susceptible to back pain equally amongst each other.

The only differences are the types of back pain they experience.

For example, it may seem like men experience back pain more often but that’s because they typically work more physically stressful jobs that damage their spinal discs.

On the other hand, women endure backaches and back pains during the course of their pregnancy. Not only do their ligaments loosen up and abdominal muscles weaken, but they carry extra weight in their tummy from the baby.

This extra weight puts significant pressure on their back that it is not used to. Even after the baby is delivered, the mother will end up stressing her back while taking care of her baby. She will be constantly carrying her child and bending over to pick her child up, which stresses the back as well.

Aside from pregnancy, women are more susceptible to developing osteoporosis when they get older. Osteoporosis can lead to degenerative arthritis and vertebral fractures.

We all have different genes because we come from different parents. This means back pain can be hereditary in some people.

For example, the relatives on your father’s side of the family could have been born with weaker or smaller discs than those on your mother’s side of the family. So if you have bad discs then it could be because you inherited them from your father’s gene pool.

The two most common types of inherited back pain are spondylolisthesis and spondylitis. All you can do in this situation is to prevent these conditions from getting worse.

You do this by eliminating the risk factors which you can control.
Risk Factors That Can Be Changed

If you are middle-aged or younger and have no family history of back pain, then chances are you can prevent back pain or even cure it if you are suffering from it right now.

The main reason why younger adults and children suffer from back pain is because of work and play. Adults who work in construction, for example, are constantly bending their backs in awkward positions all day, every day for years.

This puts a lot of pressure on their joints and ends up degrading their discs a lot faster than normal. But if you want to look at an even more common example of preventable back pain, merely riding in an automobile can put your back at risk. Most people slouch when they sit inside a car for extended periods of time.

This is the same sitting position that comes from those who sit at a desk or in front of the computer all day. These kinds of immobile bodily activities put a lot of pressure on the spine and cause it to slowly become strained.

Smoking is another risk factor for back pain that can be changed if people can learn to stop smoking altogether. Now you might wonder what smoking has to do with having a bad back, but it actually has a lot to do with it.

You see we all have blood vessels in our bodies that deliver nutrients to the spine in order to sustain its functionality.

But when you smoke, it ends up damaging these blood vessels and causing the spine to not get the nutrients it needs to function properly. Over an extended period of time, smokers who continue this pattern will develop chronic back pain and eventually a disabling kind of back pain where they won’t even be able to move normally anymore.

For this reason alone, it is a good idea to quit smoking as soon as possible.

Certain physical characteristics can also induce back pain. But there are a lot of misconceptions about the causes of back pain as it pertains to the weight, height, and strength of an individual.

You might think an overweight person’s excess weight causes them to develop back pains. The truth is that being overweight just makes existing back pains worse; it doesn’t create them. The same goes for having a slouched posture when sitting in a chair.

This slouching isn’t actually going to cause you to develop back pain, but it will worsen any developing pains that currently exist. Now this doesn’t mean you shouldn’t worry about slouching or gaining weight.

Remember there are risks factors you have no control over such as age, family history, and gender. If any of these are causing you the slightest bit of back pain then it will get worse if you continuously have poor posture and a bad diet.
So it is always good to eat healthy, sit up straight and lift weights in order to sustain your bone density and prevent worsening back pain. Psychology is probably the last thing you think of when it comes to back pain.

After all, psychology pertains to the emotions and thoughts you have in your mind. How could that ever contribute to having pain in your back? Well, there have been studies which show that anxiety, stress, and having a negative attitude, in general, can increase your chances of developing back pain.

Scientists are not 100% sure about why this is the case.

Theories about this suggest that depression and back pains share certain biochemical roots that are the same.

Two neurotransmitters called norepinephrine and serotonin have been found to both be connected to the feelings of depression and the feelings of pain in a person.

Therefore, the best way to treat this problem is to undergo cognitive behavioral therapy in order to eliminate these negative thoughts. This will, in turn, reduce the sensation of pain you have in your lower back.
Conflicting Studies

Science and medicine can be very complicated things to understand, especially when it comes to the treatment of a common medical condition like back pain.

The scientific information we have available right now about the risks factors of back pain could change at any time if new medical studies were to make conclusions that contradict previous conclusions.

There are numerous factors that could make the results of two studies different from one another. One factor has to do with the severity of the health condition in which a test subject is currently faced with. For example, let’s say there was a study done on a smoker with mild back pain.

Then as part of the study, the smoker quits smoking for 90-days under close observation. Once those 90 days are over with, the test subject reports that he no longer feels the mild back pains that he previously felt.

Due to this information, one may conclude that quitting smoking will take away a smoker’s back pain. But what doesn’t get emphasized in the study is that it was merely “mild” back pain. So if another smoker with chronic back pain were to quit smoking, it wouldn’t necessarily take away their pain like it did for the person with mild back pain.

This is why you can never take studies 100% for granted. Doctors use these studies to get treatment ideas from them, but no medical treatment or risk prevention idea will ever be 100% guaranteed effective.
CHAPTER 02: ANATOMY

The back is made up of many parts and components. If you want to understand why people develop back pain then you need to educate yourself in the anatomy of the human back. The back is a very complicated structure of the body that consists of discs, vertebrae, nerves, muscles and ligaments.

All of these elements work together in order to allow us to perform the basic motor functions that we take for granted every day such as walking, running, standing, bending, turning, lifting, and twisting.

So if there was some kind of damage inflicted upon one of these areas then your motor functions would be compromised with pain or an inability to perform them.

As far as the lower back is concerned, this is where the lower part of the spinal cord is located. It is the area that supports the majority of the weight in your upper body which puts a lot of stress on it.

If you were to put too much stress on it from lifting something heavy or twisting too hard then you would develop lower back pain quickly. But back pain can still develop just from performing your daily activities like usual. You will understand why after you learn about these vital elements of the back.
Vertebrae

The bones of the human spine are very different than bones found in other parts of the body. The spine is really a column of many smaller bones that interlock with each other. These particular bones are referred to as vertebrae.

This word comes from a Latin word that means “to turn.” It is actually the plural form of the singular word “vertebra,” which is what you would call a single interlocking bone of the spine. Vertebrae are cylindrically shaped with rings on the surface of its back. These rings have spiky areas known as “processes” which extend out from the ring in all different directions. Vertebrae are connected to each other by ligaments.

The area where two bones are connected together is called a joint. If humans did not have joints then we would not be able to walk, run, bend, twist or any of the other motor functions we are used to performing.

Joints give bones the ability to be flexible rather than remain static.

The lower area of the spine is known as the lumbar region. There are five vertebrae which make up this region. It starts from the lower portion of the rib cage and goes all the way to the sacrum area between your hip bones.

This is an important area because it is responsible for connecting the upper half of your body to the lower half.

The vertebrae of the lower back often endure the most stress. If one of these vertebrae are stressed hard enough then it will result in back pain. The word that describes strained vertebrae in the lumbar region of the back is “lumbago.”

This is a word used when someone doesn’t understand why they have lower back pain. Those who aren’t familiar with this word just refer to back pain as having a sore back or aching back.

Discs

Discs, also known as intervertebral discs, are located between two vertebrae that are connected together. Discs basically act as cushions between two interconnected vertebrae which prevent them from scraping against each other.

They also allow the spine to bend and twist in different directions and help absorb stressful or shocking conditions that the vertebrae are placed under. Even though the word “cushion” is thrown around to describe discs, they are actually very stiff.
But they can still absorb the daily stresses of life placed on the spine as well as on the spinal column and spinal cord. However, if you were to do a physical activity out of the norm, like weightlifting, then you would be at greater risk of back injury or back pain because your back is not used to the newfound stress you are placing on it.

That is why weightlifters need to start with lighter weight and then gradually move on upwards. This will allow the discs and vertebrae to strengthen and get used to the new demands being placed on them.

The lumbar region of the spine will not be strong forever. As you learned in the previous chapter, age causes bones to lose density. Something similar can be said about discs as well. Studies have shown that the nucleus of a disc starts to dry out after someone reaches the age of 30-years-old.

Once this happens, the discs will harden which will prevent them from being as flexible and elastic as they used to be.

As for the multi-layered covering on the outside of the vertebra that connects to the adjacent vertebra, the layers start to break up which weakens its connection with the adjacent vertebra.

What this all boils down to are discs which don’t have the mechanical ability they used to have because of their deterioration. As a result, the discs will not be able to absorb the everyday shocks and stresses placed on them. You could simply be walking down the street and then feel back pain all of a sudden.

A Protective Column

The spinal column is known as the protective column. This is the column that is formed by the discs and vertebrae of the spine. What is so unique about the discs and vertebrae is that they are both flexible and strong at the same time.

That way they can endure stress while giving you mechanical mobility at the same time.

But have you ever wondered how the discs and vertebrae are able to have both of these qualities? Well, the answer may be in the ligaments which are responsible for keeping vertebrae connected to each other.

There are also pony tiny protrusions under the skin of your back which you can feel with your fingers.

These protrusions are responsible for connecting your rear vertebrae together. They are known as processes. Perhaps they hold the key to understanding the durability and flexibility of the vertebrae.
There are seven processes in every single vertebra. There is the spinous process, right transverse process, left transverse process, two lower articular processes, and two upper articular processes. The articular processes form facet joints between the adjacent vertebrae that provide the spine with flexibility and stability.

But most importantly, it creates a tube of bone that shields the spine cord from outside damage or shock. Without this tube of bone, the spinal cord would become vulnerable to shock and the nerve roots would not be able to reach the proper levels.

**Muscles & Ligaments**

You have already learned about how ligaments are a fibrous tissue that connects two bones together such as vertebrae. But it is not just the ligaments that allow your vertebrae to perform motor functions like bending, twisting, stretching and so on.

There are also muscles attached to the vertebrae that allow these functions to take place. Muscles are what control the motions of your back. Not only that, muscle helps support the strength of the spine as well.

The best way to keep the ligaments and muscles healthy is through exercise. Otherwise, they will deteriorate faster and increase your chances of fracturing your vertebrae.

There are three groups of muscles that support the spine; iliopsoas, erector spinae, and abdominal muscles. The iliopsoas are a pair of muscles attached to the lumbar vertebrae, one muscle on each side of it.

They are also attached to the inner pelvis and thigh bones while passing through the frontal hip joints. These aren’t the muscles that give support to your spine, but they will provide flexibility to your hips and stability to your lower limbs when standing on your feet.

The erector spinae is a Latin phrase which represents the function of these muscles, which is to “erect the spine.” The erector spinae muscles are located in the rear of the spine on the right and left sides of it. These are very big muscles of the lower back which are responsible for supporting the spine.

They are anchored to the cervical spine, thoracic spine, rib cage, pelvis and the processes of the vertebrae. Every time you go to lift weight, particularly heavy weight, the erector spinae help make sure your spine doesn’t get damaged.
But for those who lift too much weight causing acute back pain, the erector spinae are the muscles that start to show symptoms of spasms.

Most people have heard of the abdominal muscles before, especially if you hang out in a gym or fitness setting. Everyone dreams of having six-pack abs because that means you have low body fat on your tummy.

What most people don’t think about are the functions of abdominal muscles. They are obviously very large muscles but they are not muscles connected to the spine. They are actually attached to the ribs and pelvis areas to support the stomach and the organs around the stomach. But what they also do is support the frontal lumbar region of the spine.

**Nerves**

You probably already know that the spinal cord extends from the upper lumbar region of the spine to the brain in your head. However, there are also nerve roots located in the spinal canal that extend from the upper lumbar region down to the bottom of the spine.

The lumbar region of the spinal canal has strands of nerve roots that almost look like a horse’s tail.

There are nerve fibers in these nerve roots which are responsible for the functionality of the leg muscles as well as the functionality of the bladder, genitals, and intestines.

People also have sensory nerve fibers which travel from the brain down to the spinal cord and then on to the toes of the body.

These fibers are what allow us to feel things in these areas of our body.

The spinal canal is supposed to protect these nerve roots from getting damaged. The problem is the conduit of the spinal canal tends to get narrower as we get older which ends up putting pressure on the nerve roots that it is protecting.

If the nerve roots of the lumbar vertebrae were to get pinched too much by this then it will result in lower back pains.
CHAPTER 3: CAUSES OF BACK PAIN

Back pain is something that surprises most people. Sometimes you might get a sharp pain that you feel suddenly or it could start out as a warm ache that gradually becomes something worse by the end of the day.

But then you might wake up the next day and the back pain completely goes away. This is one of the reasons why people don’t often go to get checkups with the doctor to find out what’s wrong. They’ll just blame the back pain on a specific event or experience like lifting too much weight at the gym or accidently losing their balance and falling onto the ground.

Even if you were to go to the doctor, chances are they wouldn’t be able to pinpoint the exact reason by just examining your back. The best a doctor can do is to categorize the back pain you are experiencing. Back pain is categorized by considering the location of the pain, the intensity of the pain and the overall type of pain. With this information, a doctor can make a more accurate diagnosis regarding the cause of the back pain as well as the treatments which will likely help relieve this pain.

But remember that just because a doctor may be able to categorize your back pain, it doesn’t mean the exact cause of that pain will be discovered. If you are interested in forming a self-diagnosis to try and uncover the cause then you need to learn about the most common causes of back pain.
Strains and Sprains

The number one reason for back pain has to do with strains and sprains. People who are physically active are prone to injuring their tendons or muscles. The tendons are what keep our muscles attached to the bones of our bodies. If you were to injure your tendons or even your muscles, then you would experience strain in the injured area.

The back is the most prone to receiving this kind of strain.

As for the ligaments in your spine’s vertebrae, they can also be affected and cause you to have a sprain. This will generally be an achy feeling in your back that will cause irritation. Sprains will make your back feel stiff and tight until it subsides.

But when you endure strains and sprains together, this will increase your chance of having muscle spasms in the back. Muscle spasms make it very painful when you move, which means it will limit the amount of activity you will want to do on a given day.

The only thing you will really be able to do without feeling pain is to lie down or sit down. Fortunately, strains and sprains are often temporary and will become less painful after a couple of days, depending on the severity of the injury you endured.

Nerve Compression Syndromes

Back pains that are not caused by strains or sprains are likely caused by pinched or compressed nerves, which are forms of nerve-compression syndrome. The two types of nerve-compression syndrome that cause back pain the most are spinal stenosis and disc problems. Spinal stenosis occurs when the spinal canal becomes too narrow, causing the nerve roots to get compressed or pinched.

This will create back pain in the individual as well as other symptoms which will interfere with their normal quality of life. Spinal stenosis is a condition which occurs naturally with age. Once someone reaches 50 years of age, their spine endures degenerative changes that cause the narrowing of the spinal canal to occur.

In rare instances, someone under 50-years-old can develop spinal stenosis if they were born with a smaller than normal sized spinal canal. Sometimes a person’s ligaments can thicken or get displaced, narrowing the spinal canal as a result.

Disc problems are something that people of all ages can have but for different reasons. As you have already learned, discs act as a cushion between connecting vertebrae.
All it takes is for someone to injure their disc through physical activity or an accident and it will cause the disc to get damaged, resulting in back pain.

But if disc problems occur naturally, then it will usually happen in people over the age of 50 because of disc degeneration. Once a disc degenerates too much, its jellylike center will dry up and become harder. Not only that, but the outer shell of the disc will become thinner and eventually tear up.

As a result of this degeneration, the disc will begin to bulge. If the bulge becomes too massive then it will tear through its outer shell and cause a hernia.

A herniated disc compresses the nerve roots that are nearby, resulting in severe back pain and inflammation. You’ll be able to tell when you have a hernia because the back pain will be more intense than usual.

You may even feel pain or numbness in your legs or buttocks. But the pain in your back will be constant and it will feel worse when you bend, sneeze, cough or twist. If these symptoms occur then you’ll need to go to a doctor for a professional diagnosis.

**Arthritis**

Arthritis is a condition where the facet joints start to degenerate as you get older. A person with arthritis will experience irregular back pains over many months and years.

People often don’t realize they have arthritis at first because the pains are less severe on some days and more severe on other days. It isn’t until a person goes to the doctor that they discover it is arthritis and not a pulled muscle.

Ankylosing spondylitis is the most common type of arthritis where the spine becomes stiff and inflamed, causing the person to experience great pain.

It will even make it harder for them to move because of the stiffness and inflammation they’ll have to endure from this.

Studies have shown that early signs of arthritis begin a few years before reaching the age of 40. In the beginning, the pain and stiffness will be mild.

A person may think their back is just strained or ruptured. But if the pain is felt on the pelvis and the entire lower back then it is more than just a strain; it is, in fact, ankylosing spondylitis. Without treatment, your spinal joints could end up getting fused together, creating a rigid back that cannot be fixed.
Spondylolisthesis

If there are defects in any of your spine’s vertebrae, that vertebra will become unaligned with the other vertebra it is connected to. The misalignment occurs naturally in some people while others have it because of degenerative issues or an injury they received.

Someone with these symptoms is said to have a condition known as spondylolisthesis. Anyone suffering from this condition will experience intense lower back pain and irritation in their hips and thighs.

If the condition emerges from an injury then it is likely from an athletic injury where someone lifted too much weight or got slammed into by someone else. On the other hand, if the facet joints become degenerated over time then a person will develop spondylolisthesis on their own.

This not only has to do with age but rather the consistent use of the facet joints and discs over a long period of time. Eventually, they will get worn out and start to deteriorate.

Symptoms of ‘Red Flag’ Back Pain

As you know by now, there are all kinds of back pains. Most back pains are just temporary backaches that usually go away on their own. But there are also back pains which require a visit to the doctor before they get worse.

The trick is to be able to differentiate the pains that are just temporary and the pains that require medical attention.

You can tell the difference by looking out for warning signs, or red flags, in the symptoms that you’re faced with. Some of these red flags include groin numbness, uncontrollable bladder, increasing pain, sudden leg weakness and not being comfortable in any position. These kinds of symptoms are very serious and likely due to nerve irritation in these areas.

If you just ignore these red flags and do nothing then you could end up having irreversible damage as a result. So always get medical attention if you are suffering from any of these symptoms and conditions.
Causes of ‘Red Flag’ Back Pain

Cauda equina syndrome is a rare cause of back pain that is a red flag. This syndrome occurs when you have a severely herniated disc with many nerves that are compressed. This will not only cause excruciating back pain but may cause you to develop bowel incontinence as well. If the nerves are compressed too severely then you may lose feeling in your legs.

In this case, you would need to seek out medical attention before the nerves get even more damage that is irreversible.

Another cause of red flag back pain is a vertebral fracture received from sudden aggressive impact to any of the vertebrae such as from falling onto the ground. When you have fractured vertebrae, it will be both painful and disabling. It will hurt every time you touch the injured area and it will hurt even more when you perform basic movements.

If the impact you endured was too severe then your nerve roots or spinal cord could have been damaged from the bone fragment of the vertebrae. In these cases, you will feel numbness, weakness, and bowel or urinary incontinence. A doctor will be the only one that can determine where the fracture is located.

Vertebral fractures aren’t only caused by impact or injury, though. People over the age of 50 will lose density in their bones, causing them to get weaker. This will increase the chances of breaking your bones even if you haven’t injured them.

As for those who suffer from osteoporosis, you could develop vertebral fractures just from performing your normal daily activities. Something as minor as sneezing or bending could cause what is known as an osteoporotic fracture. This is where the damaged vertebra is at risk of collapsing which results in a shortened spine.

The kind of pain you’ll feel from an osteoporotic fracture is so severe that the pain will likely be felt all around your torso. The only way you’ll be able to get any relief from this pain is if you lie down.

Any other kinds of movements will only increase the pain. Over 50% of vertebral fractures people receive are due to osteoporosis and over 66% of them are never diagnosed. People have trouble telling the different kinds of pain apart from each other.

They’ll just naturally assume they’re feeling strain or sprain pain when these fractures occur. But if these vertebral fractures remain untreated for too long, then it could result in a rounded back, heavy breathing and loss of height.

We are all familiar with bacterial infections in terms of getting sick. But there are rare circumstances where an infection could be the reason for why you’re feeling back pain. If you have a bacterial infection involving your facet joints, vertebrae or discs then this can create back pain symptoms.
Don’t forget that bacteria flows through your bloodstream which means it can flow passed your spine. However, the bacterial infection doesn’t start in the spine. Chances are you’ll already have some kind of infection in another part of your body.

This could be a urinary tract infection, skin infection, or merely getting stuck with a hypodermic needle that was not sterilized.

Those who suffer from existing diseases that weaken the immune system, such as AIDS or diabetes, are also at risk of a spinal infection. Sometimes even medications that weaken the immune system can bring this on as well. If you’ve got a spinal infection then the symptoms will include fever and muscle spasms in the back.

Spinal infections may be rare, but developing spinal cancer is even rarer. Studies have shown that less than 1% of people who suffer from back pain end up having spinal cancer. But in the rare instances where spinal cancer does occur, it will result in a spinal tumor that grows on the person’s back.

Spinal tumors are very painful and will become even more painful as time goes on. In addition to that, you’ll feel coldness, numbness and pain at irregular times in your ankles or legs. Like spinal infections, spinal tumors often form by cancer that spreads from another part of the body such as the lung or breast.

In extreme cases, cancerous tumors will develop in the ligaments and bones of the spine, or the nerve roots or spinal cord.

It can be hard to self-diagnose spinal tumors because the back pain symptoms are similar to that of strains and sprains.

But the difference is the pain from a tumor will get worse instead of better. At this point, only a doctor would be able to diagnose the pain as being from a spinal tumor.

Organ disorders can play a role in causing back pain. Even the though affected organs may not directly relate to the spine, you will still feel back pain in your spinal area.

This kind of pain is known as referred pain. It can be difficult to diagnose this pain because it has nothing to do with the spine. But any disorders involving the abdominal or pelvic area will often induce back pain.

This includes disorders of the uterus, liver, pancreas or kidneys as well.
CHAPTER 4: DIAGNOSING THE CONDITION

There are various kinds of doctors you can go to for a diagnosis of your back pain condition. For most people, they only have a primary care physician who they go to for medical attention. These physicians are merely doctors who know a little bit about everything related to health.

However, they are not experts in one particular area so they will not be able to give you an accurate diagnosis of your back pain.

When you first go to the physician about your back pain, they may give you some minor prescription drugs for the pain. Either that or they will simply tell you to try a few home remedies and wait it out. Most back pain symptoms will go away after a few weeks.

But if it does not go away, then you could be experiencing one of the red flag symptoms talked about in the previous chapter. If your primary care physician determines that you likely have these particular symptoms, they will tell you to go see a back specialist who can give you a more thorough examination.

This could be a physiatrist, rheumatologist, orthopedist or neurologist; depending on the symptoms. But before you get diagnosed, you should educate yourself in what doctors look for when they conduct a diagnostic examination of our back.

That way you will be less nervous and more prepared when you visit the doctor or specialist.
Medical History & Examination

When you go to see a physician about your back pain, the very first thing they are going to look at is your medical history. If you have documented medical history of back pain then it will help your physician understand why you may be feeling your current back pain.

The physician will consider a number of factors when analyzing your medical history.

They’ll look for the duration you experienced back pain in the past as well as its intensity level. They’ll also look to see if you ever experienced numbness in your legs or if performing normal actions like sneezing and coughing ever made the pain feel worse.

Most importantly, your physician will look to see if you’ve had any red flag symptoms in the past. If they do discover these symptoms in your medical history then it could mean you have a spinal tumor or bacterial infection in the spine. From a physical standpoint, signs of these serious conditions could include fever or weight loss. Aside from all of this, other risk factors will also be discussed such as whether you are a smoker and whether your family history shows someone with back pain or spinal cancer in it.

After your physician studies all of this information about your history, they will begin the actual physical examination process.

The first thing they will check is the contour of your back, specifically its range of motion. The doctor will check the flexibility of your knees and ankles.

They will also look for any signs of weak muscles, particularly in your legs because this is where irritated spinal nerve roots can be detected. A simple motion such as extending your leg straight and holding it in that position will be asked of you by the doctor.

If you start to feel pain at any time from this action then it means there’s inflammation in the nerve roots of your spine. It could also mean there is compression in the disc area.

The doctor will continue to have you perform a series of reflex motions in order to determine exactly where the pain or numbness is coming from. More importantly, it determines which particular nerve roots of the spine are damaged or degenerated.
Diagnostic Imaging

Thanks to diagnostic imaging technology, physicians have a much easier time nowadays in diagnosing back pain. The most common imaging tests given to patients with back pain include MRI, CT, X-Rays, and Myelography.

However, some experts think that imaging scans are unnecessary for diagnosing back pain because they usually don’t lead to any improvements in the patient’s condition or comfort level. This is likely due to the fact that imaging scans show a variety of unrelated abnormalities which have nothing to do with the back pain that a person is experiencing.

For example, if a 60-year-old man receives an x-ray and it shows he has arthritis, it still isn’t going to help figure out where their back pain is coming from. But if you want to categorize your back pain and figure out the condition of your spine, then imaging scans can do the job. They just won’t be able to find the source responsible for your back pain.

X-rays

Everyone has heard of X-rays before. This is a form of image scanning where the doctor gets to print images of your skeleton in order to study your bones. X-rays are great for determining if your vertebrae are degenerating or not. But what X-rays won’t do is show signs of degeneration in your ligaments, discs, muscles and bodily tissues.

They are only good for locating bone fractures and more serious spinal conditions such as bacterial infections and tumors.

The technology behind X-rays involves exposing the patient to small amounts of radiation. But if you only get the X-ray scanning done once in a while then it won’t have any negative health effects.

CT Scans

Computed tomography imaging, or CT imaging, is a more thorough type of X-ray that shows more visual details about the condition of the back. The patient has to lie down on a table for 15 minutes or so while a scanner device takes pictures of different parts of their body.

This is different than a traditional X-ray that just beams your entire body once. CT scans actually use many smaller beams on different areas of your body to generate more specific X-ray images of these areas.
This gives the doctors more details about what is going on inside those areas, particularly your vertebrae. CT scans will show the doctor if there are signs of fracture or degeneration going on in your vertebrae.

CT scans will even allow doctors to notice if your spinal canal is narrowing or if you have arthritis. But what it can’t do is determine if your back pain is caused by a herniated disc. Also, CT scans expose patients to a higher level of radiation than traditional X-ray machines because of all the beaming.

**MRIs**

MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging. This particular diagnostic imaging technology creates pictures of your soft tissues through electromagnetic waves. The benefit to this method is that radiation is not used on the patient.

But more importantly, it will provide detailed images of spinal nerves, tumors, and discs. A doctor will compare the results of the MRI to the patient’s medical history in order to come up with a more accurate diagnosis of their back pain.

The process of performing an MRI involves having the patient lie down inside a large tube for 45 minutes while it scans their entire body using electromagnetic waves.

If someone is believed to have problems with the nerve roots in their lumbar region then a diagnostic imaging procedure known as myelography will be performed. This type of imaging system shows where the nerve roots are positioned in the lumbar region.

This is where the nerve roots come out of the spinal cord in the lower back while surrounded by vertebrae. If there are any distortions around the spinal cord in this area then myelography will uncover them. It will also uncover spinal tumors, stenosis, or herniated discs if they exist as well.

However, this type of diagnostic imaging is not used as often as CT imaging or MRIs. The only times myelography is used is when a doctor has trouble diagnosing a patient’s back pain using the other diagnostic imaging methods. They may also use it on a patient before they go into surgery in order to pinpoint the troubled areas more precisely.
Rare Tests

All of the diagnostic imaging tests previously talked about are the first tests usually conducted by a physician. The problem is these tests still leave a number of possible reasons for why someone is experiencing back pain.

In order for a physician to be as accurate as possible with their diagnosis, they have to narrow down the possible reasons for the back pain much further. This means conducting an electromyography or a bone scan. These are rare tests done only in situations where a serious cause of back pain is believed to exist.

Bone scans are done by a physician injecting a small amount of radioactive material into your circulating bloodstream. What the physician will study is how fast your bones absorb the radioactive material. This will determine how active the cells of your bones are.

At the same time, the physician will check the bone scan image for any signs of infection, fracture or tumor. Once they are able to spot the location of one of these defects, a more thorough diagnosis can be made.

And despite radioactive substances being injected into the patient, there is still less risk of radiation poisoning than the amount of radiation absorbed from a regular X-ray.

In situations when a doctor wants to study the condition of your nerves, they will use an electromyography test.

This is a test in which your muscles get needles inserted into them so the electrical activity from your muscular movements can be recorded. If there is any compression or some other form of irritation experienced by your spinal nerves then this test will reveal that.

The test is often performed in conjunction with a nerve conduction test, which analyzes spinal nerve root functionality.
CHAPTER 5: TREATMENT

If you have gone to the physician and they have diagnosed you with back pain then don’t get too nervous about it.

We live in the 21st century and there are many sophisticated treatment options available which can reduce the intensity of your back pain while increasing your comfort level.

These treatment options could merely be medications, home remedies or exercises that you’ll have to take.

In more severe circumstances, you may need surgery to relieve the back pain.

There are so many different kinds of back pain practitioners who are experts in various kinds of back pain. When you go to your primary care physician they will be able to recommend which expert you should go to.
Considerations

When choosing a treatment option for your back pain, you have to consider your medical history and personal situation with this pain. You need to consider how long you’ve experienced this pain and whether or not the pain has gotten worse.

Also, ask yourself if you’ve ever been treated for a similar kind of back pain before. All of these considerations will go a long way in deciding a treatment option.

For example, if you only experience moderate pain in your back then a non-surgical approach would be best to treat it. These pains would merely be backaches which originate from sprains or strains. But if the pain gets more intense, then chances are surgery will have to be a consideration to relieve the pain.

What it all comes down to is whether or not the back pain will get better on its own. The majority of people who suffer from herniated discs end up recovering on their own, but it takes about three months for that to happen.

Chances are anyone suffering from compressed nerve roots can wait out their recovery on their own. However, it’s those people with chronic back pain that have to be careful. This is the kind of pain that doesn’t get better after three months.

If the pain does go away before three months then it is acute back pain rather than chronic back pain. Acute pain is felt quickly because it is usually the result of an injury, sprain or strain. Typically, acute back pain takes about seven weeks to go away. If it doesn’t go away and you think you may have chronic back pain then it’s time to get treatment from a doctor.

Self Treatments

No matter what stage of your back pain timeline you are in, you should always be giving yourself home remedies and self-treatments to try and soothe the pain. Of course, go to your doctor first to learn about what treatments you can perform at home.

That way you know you are using techniques that have been proven to be effective. Doctors tend to deal with patients who just want to take medication to solve their back pain problem because it is the easiest solution.

However, this solution is not as effective as treating yourself with exercise and performing activities in the future that don’t stress out your back. This could be taking walks outside and conducting stretching sessions every day. If you work at a job which puts stress on your back then you may have to help yourself by getting a new job.
Simple lifestyle changes like these can go a long way in treating common back pains. If your back pain is due to an injury, then you can initially take back pain medications to relieve the pain while you work with a physical therapist to get better. Just don’t get hooked on the pain medications. Only take them if the pain is unbearable.

**Doctor Treatments**

Your primary care physician or back pain specialist will always be able to provide some kind of treatment to alleviate your back pain. However, this doesn’t mean that they’re just going to write you a prescription for painkillers because those are narcotic and highly addictive.

They are only prescribed to patients who are in constant pain but only on a temporary basis. If you have chronic back pain then you won’t be prescribed painkillers forever. Painkillers are usually prescribed to ease the initial pain felt from a post-surgical procedure.

Chronic back pain sufferers typically get sent to physical therapists for treatment. They are the ones who have the training to determine the cause of your back pain and any other musculoskeletal problems you may be experiencing.

They will work with you to strengthen the muscles in your back and abdominal region. More importantly, physical therapists will reduce your back pain and preserve the motor function of your spine.

In addition, they will give education on how to take care of yourself to prevent any future back pains. This includes recommended exercise routines and relaxation techniques to ease the pain on your own when it occurs.

**Team Effort**

This book has briefly talked about how there are multiple back pain specialists you can go to. If you have only gone to one specialist for your back pain condition and still feel irritation or painful symptoms then you may need to go to other kinds of specialists. Now this doesn’t mean you dump your current specialist. It just means you go to other ones who specialize in other areas of the back.

For example, a neurologist specializes on issues related to the nerves of your body. In this case, they’ll focus on the nerve roots of your spinal cord and see if they are causing you pain. If you end up needing surgery to fix any nerve damage you may have, then you’ll be sent to a neurosurgeon for that.
In most common cases of back pain, it has to do with problems in the ligaments, joints, and muscles of the skeletal system.

An orthopedist will be your best hope in this scenario for diagnosing and treating these types of back pain conditions. If they need to determine if your body can heal itself then you may also have to see an osteopath, which are experts in the musculoskeletal system.

If the orthopedist discovers your back pain in your joints and muscles is due to a rheumatic disease then they’ll refer you to a rheumatologist for treatment.

As you can see, there is no one doctor that can solve all of your back problems. There are so many different types of back problems so it requires you to see a team of specialists to solve these problems rather than just one specialist.

**Treatment Guidelines**

When you are considering your treatment options, there are some treatment guidelines you should follow which have been created by various prominent medical societies. These guidelines are for patients just as much as they are for doctors.

For example, people who suffer from backaches should not undergo any type of diagnostic imaging test or consume prescription painkillers. Most backache symptoms can be relieved from simple over-the-counter drugs like ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

You don’t want to over treat your minor back pain with stronger drugs because if you ever have worse back pain in the future then those drugs won’t be as effective for relieving the pain. It is important for patients to understand this and not ask their doctor for something stronger than acetaminophen to treat minor back pain.

Sometimes doctors end up prescribing narcotic medication when it is not really necessary. This is why doctors need to follow these treatment guidelines as well and refuse a patient who asks for painkillers when it is unnecessary.
CHAPTER 6: SELF-HELP FOR BACK PAIN

The last chapter touched upon the idea of self-treatment to relieve your back pain. This chapter will go further into that. Remember you don’t always have to put all of your faith into your doctor.

Since back pain is not an exact science, doctors won’t always be right 100% of the time. Your judgment can be just as invaluable as theirs, especially since you know your own back pain and what you may have done to inflict it upon yourself.

Most back pain conditions will clear up after a few weeks without having to do anything. But if you choose the right self-treatment option, then the pain could go away a lot faster. First, you have to understand all of the available self-treatment options and what types of back pain they are effective in relieving.
**Cold and Heat Therapy**

This is the oldest home remedy in the book. All you have to do is press something cold or warm to the area of your back that is in pain. The most recommended option is something cold like an ice pack, especially if the back pain is the result of an injury.

The great thing about cold therapy is it will numb the painful area. If there is swelling in this area then that will be reduced as well. Overall, cold therapy is good to treat painful symptoms when they first occur. But if it has been two days and you still have back pain, then you should try heat therapy instead. Heat has the ability to soothe muscles that are aching. Not only that, the warmth will increase your blood flow which results in more nutrients and oxygen being transported to the affected area.

This is how the body naturally heals damaged areas. To generate the heat for compression on your back, you can use hot water bottles or heating pads.

But whether you use cold therapy or heat therapy, never apply the source of the temperature directly to the skin. Always have a soft piece of material between your skin and the source. Also, try not to fall asleep with a heat pack on your skin because you can still get skin burns that way.

**Rest**

The body heals itself best when it sleeps. It also relieves stress that is normally put on the lumbar region of the spine. However, it is not good to rest in bed for extended periods of time because it will cause negative symptoms to occur. For example, the muscles won’t be as toned and conditioned as they usually are.

You’ll also have an increased risk of developing blood clots in the veins of your legs and pelvis, gastrointestinal problems, loss of energy and even depression. Therefore, you have to rest in moderation just like you have to exercise in moderation.

Too much of anything will be bad for your back pain. This means you should get your eight hours of sleep, and then wake up in the morning to start your exercises. Even a mere walk around the block is good enough for starting the day and relieving your back.

Now if you have extreme back pain and can only get relief by lying down in bed, then try to rest in intervals. This means resting for a few hours, getting up to walk around for a few hours, and then repeat.

If you have to stay in bed longer then put pillows between your knees and under your head if you rest on the side of your body.
If you rest on your back then put the pillows under your knees. It is not recommended that you lie on your stomach, but if you must then put the pillows under your hips.

By using the pillow in this way, you will be reducing the pressure placed on your back by aligning your posture. It will also relax the muscles, ligaments and discs of your body while you sleep.

**Exercise**

You probably already know the importance of exercise. It is not only good for your cardiovascular health, but it is also good for your spinal health as well. Most medical experts will agree that the quickest way to relieving back pain is to get up and move around. If you have acute back pain then exercise therapy is always recommended.

It will help prevent future backaches and help you function better in your daily activities. But even if you have chronic back pain, exercise can also help with some of the symptoms.

All you need is to take part in an exercise program which allows you to build muscle, stretch, and performs aerobics. Not only will this alleviate back pain, but it will reduce your chances of obtaining injuries when you perform physical activities in the future.

Anyone with chronic back pain should talk with their physician before starting an exercise program. Chances are they will create a suitable program for you. After all, there are many variables that go into back pain. You need an exercise program that will meet your specific needs and only a doctor will be able to create such a program.

But not matter what kind of exercise you perform, just remember that you should stop if it becomes painful. If you try to tough it out and work through the pain then you’ll just end up making the pain worse. Exercise therapy is supposed to be about taking away the pain, not adding it.

So if you’re around the “no pain, no gain” types in the gym then stay away from them. Pain might be acceptable in bodybuilding, but it is not acceptable when you are trying to alleviate back pain.

When you start exercise therapy, you will begin with simple exercises and work your way up. Walking is the simplest exercise and it is great for people suffering from back strain or back pain because it won’t make the symptoms worse.

You’ll want to walk every day for a set time that you think you can handle. For most beginners, 20 minutes of walking is good enough per day. But what you’ll want to do is increase your time by 10% every week.
Then after 6 weeks or so, you’ll be doubling the amount of time you walk outside. If you experience back pain at any time during your exercising then you might have pushed yourself too far. At this point, you should just stop for the day and try again tomorrow at your previous duration.

Eventually, you will get to a point where walking is too easy and you will want to do a more challenging aerobic exercise. In this case, you could take up swimming or bicycling for strengthening your back muscles as well as your abdominal muscles and erector spine.

You can even make aerobics more fun by getting your exercise through sports. Join a local baseball or basketball team to get aerobic exercise that way.

You can also play golf, go bowling, or join a dance class. As long as your heart rate is up and you’re sweating, then you’re on the right track.

One of the reasons why older people have such weak muscles and bones is because they don’t exercise. They probably exercised when they were younger but as they got older they were so consumed with all their adult responsibilities that they neglected their physical health. This ends up causing weak abdominal muscles and degenerated vertebrae which result in back pain.

But don’t worry because you can recover from this by strengthening and stretching your core muscles. If you do this on a gradual basis then it will reduce your back pain to the point where it will go away.

Then you just have to keep on strengthening and stretching your core muscles to prevent the pain from coming back. The core muscles consist of the abdominals, buttocks, and back.

If you remember from the previous chapter, we talked about how the abdominals are crucial for supporting the spine. Strong abdominals not only prevents back pain but it helps promote an upright posture as well.

And, of course, strong back muscles will also help with your posture as well as keeping your vertebrae aligned. As for the buttocks, they actually support your back while you are sitting, standing, or walking.

In addition, you’ll want to strengthen your leg muscles because they are connected to your buttocks and help prevent strain to the structures that support your back.

Just remember to stretch before your exercises. Stretching is the one pre-exercise workout that most people avoid before lifting weights or performing cardiovascular activities. Stretching is important for alleviating back pain and loosening the joints.

If you stretch your muscles well each day then they are less likely going to get injured from a workout or from merely performing normal daily activities. People who don’t stretch their muscles will have less joint mobility, which means their chances of having strains or sprains will increase.
Complementary Therapies

Back pain can strike like lightning. When it does strike, you’ll want to find a way to alleviate the pain right away. Complementary therapies work better than medical treatments in these cases.

If you suffer from acute back pain, for example, then you can combine complementary therapies with exercise in order to alleviate this pain quickly. A trained practitioner will be the one to perform complementary therapies on you.

There are different kinds of complementary therapies so choose the ones you feel will work best for you.

Chiropractic care is the most common complementary therapy for alleviating back pain. This type of care involves having a chiropractor perform spinal manipulation on your back by putting pressure on your vertebrae.

It is called a manipulation because the chiropractor will gently twist your shoulders, hips, and head in order to temporarily move certain areas of the spine. The manipulation involves the use of hands and fingers. Sometimes the chiropractor will use cold and heat therapies, electrotherapies, and massages as well.

Chiropractic care gives the best results, but it can get expensive because you’ll have to keep going back on a regular basis. Acupuncture is perhaps the oldest complimentary therapy for healing back pain. Before modern day medicine, acupuncture was the main treatment source for dysfunction and pain in the back.

The way it works is a practitioner will take very thin needles that are sterilized and stick them through the skin in various places of the body that have joints. Sometimes the needles are electrified or heated to give them actual energy.

This will supposedly relax your joints and relieve your back pain. Some medical experts find this therapy controversial, but if all else fail then you mine as well try it out. About 50% of those who’ve tried acupuncture claim it successfully relieved their pain.

Therapeutic massages are more pleasant for relieving lower back pain. This simply involves having a massage therapist relax the muscles of your back with their hands. You’re probably already familiar with this process either by seeing it on television or watching someone else go through it. These massages can release so much tension from your muscles that you will feel completely refreshed afterward.

Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, also known as TENS, is a type of therapy where a person gets electrically stimulated in order for their body to release endorphins. You have probably heard of endorphins before in terms of exercise.
When our body is put under physical stress like from exercise, our central nervous system naturally releases these hormones to ease the stress of our body.

TENS is a way to get this benefit without actually having to do the exercise. It works best to fight short-term lower back pain, but it is not a solution to treat long-term lower back pain.

Ultrasound is typically a word you hear in connection with a pregnant woman who sees an x-ray of her child inside of her.

Well, the same kind of ultrasound energy can be used as a form of ultrasound therapy to ease the pain of your back. Physical therapists are usually the ones to administer this kind of therapy.

By applying ultrasound energy to the painful areas of the back, it will increase blood flow so that blood can deliver the proper nutrients to the affected tissues there. This will ultimately heal these affected areas and alleviate the pain much faster. It is not a long-term treatment, but it helps temporarily take away a patient’s pain while they undergo physical therapy.

We have already touched upon aerobic exercise as being crucial, but there are also complementary exercises that can be beneficial as well.

If you suffer from chronic back pain, for example, then you need to take any approach you can to treating it. Exercises such as tai chi and yoga are old school exercises that have been known to assist in the recovery process.

You’ve probably heard of yoga before, but there are many variations of it. The one thing these variations pretty much have in common is they involve putting your body into various poses and positions while breathing calmly. The idea is to get into a meditative state without thinking about any of your pain.

You should do yoga with an instructor or practitioner to ensure you don’t twist the wrong way and injure yourself further. Most gyms in local communities have yoga classes you can join for free.

As for tai chi, this is an old style of martial arts which you can incorporate into a body exercise. It involves breathing deeply, shifting your weight and conducting calm turning movements. This is said to benefit the entire musculoskeletal system and it should be practiced every day.
Why Healthy Living is Important

No matter what kind of treatments you undertake for your back pain, they won’t do you much good if you don’t maintain a healthy lifestyle. This means maintaining a healthy weight, refrain from smoking, don’t put weight on your back, developing healthy habits, and taking care of your neck.

The biggest challenge for people is maintaining a healthy weight. With all of the fatty food options available to the public nowadays, it is easy to add on extra weight. Now there have been no proven studies to show that being obese actually causes back pain. However, being overweight does make existing back pain worse because all of that excess weight puts pressure on the spine.

Most people have a problem with excess fat in their abdominal region. What abdominal fat will do to a person is pull their spine forward and misalign their center of gravity. As for those who have more muscle mass instead of fat mass, your spine will be in better shape because the weight is evenly distributed throughout your body and your weight lifting has already strengthened your spine to sustain extra muscle weight.

Overall, you need to watch your body mass index, or BMI, to ensure you have low fat on your body. BMI calculates your body fat based on your weight and height. A BMI between 19 and 25 is in the normal range.

We have already touched upon a little bit about why smoking is bad. You should already know that smoking increases your chances of getting heart disease, lung cancer, hypertension, yellow teeth and an array of other health issues.

But it also can weaken your back by lowering the blood flow to your discs and vertebrae which will cause them to become deficient in vital nutrients. This will result in back pain and eventually a loss of bone density. If this trend continues then you could develop osteoporosis. Therefore, you now have one more reason to quit smoking. Don’t wait until you have back pain to finally do it.

As much as extra weight on the front of your body is bad for your spine, you don’t want to put extra weight on your back either.

This means lightening the load you have in your backpacks for work or school. A huge reason why younger people have back pain is because they stuff all their school books into a backpack rather than putting them in their lockers. If you are an adult who is going hiking, for example, then you may be wearing an even heavier backpack on your back.

Regardless of which scenario you are in, at least use both straps when you wear your backpack. Don’t just lift your heavy load with one strap around your shoulder while the other one is hanging because that will cause hurt the back even more.

Also, try to arrange your heavier items near the middle of your backpack in order to center it to your body. This will also help reduce back pain from carrying this heavy pack.
Finally, remember to bend your knees when you reach down for your backpack. Never lock your knees straight when bending to pick up something heavy because that will make your back pain much worse.

The overall trick to alleviating back pain is to be active. If you sit in front of the computer for hours or watch television while sitting on the couch then you are hurting your back. Try to find activities around the house to take part in.

You could vacuum the rug, play catch with your dog or mow the lawn outside. All of these mobile activities will take pressure off your back. If you conduct activities where you have to stand, try to keep your back straight. Then when you have to sit down, keep your knees at a 90° angle with your feet flat on the floor.

These little tricks will help take some pressure off your back. Always try to think about the alignment of your back and the pressure being placed on it whenever you sit or stand. The simplest changes in body mechanics can go a long way.

Lastly, protect your neck as much as possible because it is the most vulnerable to pains and aches. It is the easiest area of the body to develop sprains, tension, strains, and poor posture. The neck gets affected from not sleeping properly, not sitting properly and even by not standing properly.

Therefore, always try to keep your head straight no matter what you are doing. If you are sleeping on your side then put a pillow between your legs and a pillow that is not too high or too low. The idea is to keep your head aligned with your spine.

**Best Mattress for Back Pain Sufferers**

If you suffer from lower back pain then you may be wondering if buying a better mattress will help reduce your pain. It can be confusing to know which mattress is right to purchase with all the conflicting information out there. Some doctors claim that firm mattresses are better while others say softer mattresses are better because they will conform to the contours of your back.

The best thing you can do is try out different mattresses and see which one feels comfortable to you. Go to a showroom that has multiple types of beds and lie down on each one. This is the ultimately way to know for sure.
Exercises for Strengthening the Back

If you have achy back muscles then there are a few simple exercises you can perform to reduce this pain. Place a mat down on the floor and lie down on the mat.

Bend your knees and then pull one of your knees toward your chest. Hold this position for about 10 seconds. Then do the same thing with the other knee.

Repeat this process at least 5 times. A variation of this exercise is pulling both knees forward toward your chest instead of one at a time. And if you want to make it really easy, just keep your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor while keeping your back straight.

To take this exercise a step further, gently try to reach for your knees by sticking your hands straight out in front of you. Bend upwards as if you were going to do a crunch while keeping your feet flat on the floor.

If you want to strengthen your core muscles while lying down, lift your pelvis up in the air while keeping the other parts of your body flat on the floor. You’ll want to try and have your buttocks be about 5 inches off the floor.

Calm Neck Pain Exercises

Neck exercises are merely neck stretching exercises which are something most people never do. But if you want to prevent neck fractures, injuries or pain, then you’ll want to practice some of these neck exercises.

The easiest one is keeping your neck straight and then turning your head slowly to one side for 10 seconds, and then repeat for the other side. If you want to strengthen your front neck muscles then sit up straight on a chair, put the palm of your hand on your forehead and then try to bring your chin to your chest. Hold the position for 5 seconds.

Repeat this process 10 times.

This will help reduce muscle strain and will promote the proper alignment of your spine. You can reverse this exercise to strengthen your back neck muscles by putting your hand on the back of your head and then leaning your head backward instead of forwards.

The same method goes for the side neck muscles as well.
Connection of the Mind and Body

The mind and body are inseparable. Each one has a huge impact on how the other functions and feels. If you want to relieve back pain then there are mental therapies and exercises you can undertake to take your mind off the pain.

The most popular exercise for doing this. It is basically a talk therapy where the therapist tries to change how the patient behaves, feels and thinks in stressful circumstances.

The way we react in a stressful situation usually ends up causing more physical pain than the situation itself. If we can learn to react in a way that reduces stress on our body then it will help when alleviating back pain.

There are also mental practices you can undergo to help take your mind off the pain and instead focus on positive thoughts.

These practices include meditation, guided imagery, and hypnosis.
CONCLUSION

Back pain is something that strikes people from all walks of life. It doesn’t matter where you are in the world, what your age is, or what gender you are. Back pain can strike at any time for a variety of different reasons. If you haven’t felt back pain yet then chances are you will feel it later on in your life.

You probably already know someone right now who has back pain. The most frustrating thing about back pain is that it is hard to trace the root of the problem.

Sometimes the cause of back pain can be found somewhere else on your body that isn’t even located in your back.

This book has explained the most common medical conditions and causes associated with back pain. There is no single underlying cause of back pain, which is why back pain cannot be defined by just one definition. Back pain has got to be felt, examined, and diagnosed before treatment can begin.

And even then, there is no guarantee that the diagnosis is going to be 100% accurate. That is why doctors can never pinpoint the exact type of back pain or its root cause.
All doctors can do is categorize the back pain of a patient and then give them treatment that is most likely to be effective for it.

The best way to avoid severe back pain is to look for the red flags early on.

That way you can receive treatment before your back pain gets worse. This book has taught you about the red flags to watch out for and how to manage your back pain by implementing lifestyle changes to promote a healthier back.

If you ever have a red flag in your life then seek medical attention immediately before the symptoms get worse. That’s all anyone can do who is suffering from back pain with red flags. Aside from medical attention, the rest is all on you.

There is no magic pill or gadget that is going to take away your back pain. You have to consistently work at it every day with proper exercise, diet, and remembering to maintain good posture in virtually every position you put your body into.

It doesn’t matter if you are sitting at the computer or sleeping on your bed. Every position you put your body in affects your spine in some way.

The idea is to keep your spine straight as often as possible. Imagine a straight line going from your head down to your pelvis on your backside. This straight line represents your spine. Now just go through the rest of the day without bending that straight line.

These are the kinds of actions you need to be thinking about in your everyday life in order to alleviate back pain and prevent it from getting worse. Hopefully, this book has helped pave the path for you to finally do that for yourself.

If you know anyone else with back pains then recommend this book to them so they can get educated as well. Thank you and good luck.

Kevin Richardson