



Prevention, The Best Treatment For Back Pain

(NAPSA)—Each year, an estimated 15 to 45 percent of Americans experience back pain. That's according to *Healthy People 2010: Arthritis, Osteoporosis and Chronic Back Conditions*, a new report by the Department of Health and Human Services.

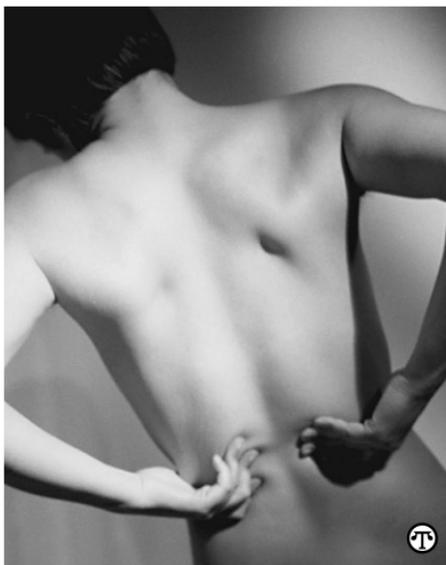
Back pain can occur as a result of bad personal health habits and personal risk factors such as smoking, excessive weight gain, lack of exercise, lack of flexibility and unnecessary strain on the back. Depending on the cause, back pain can occur in different areas of the back while inflicting different types and degrees of pain.

Some patients experience the occasional dull pain. Others suffer from constant, agonizing pain, making even the simplest movements difficult. Either way, both types prohibit people from completing normal daily activities. To reduce the risk of suffering from back pain, patients must understand what causes unnecessary strain on the back. Once patients understand the causes, they can figure out ways to eliminate them from their lives.

Years of bad posture are the cause of back pain for many. Practicing the habit of sitting up straight can prevent back pain, as well as using correct form when lifting heavy items or when completing daily tasks. Overall, the way you sit, twist, bend, lift things and even relax may either cause or prevent back pain.

Tips for preventing or minimizing the occurrence of back pain include refraining from excessive strenuous activities and limiting the amount of time spent performing heavy manual labor and participating in strenuous sports.

If taking these measures does not prevent back pain, or an existing condition worsens, a visit to the physician's office may be necessary. After examining a patient with chronic back pain, a physician can determine if surgery, medication or other forms of treatment may solve the problem. Muscle relaxers or pain relievers may help to relieve the pain. In some cases, surgery



Back pain can often be alleviated through osteopathic manipulative treatment.

might be needed to repair damaged muscle or tissue responsible for causing pain.

Another form of treatment that can be offered to patients by osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) is called osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT). In this hands-on treatment, D.O.s use their hands to examine the back and other parts of the body, such as joints, tendons, ligaments and muscles, for pain and restriction that could signal an injury or impaired function.

OMT can be helpful in relieving back pain as well as discomfort and musculoskeletal abnormalities associated with a number of disorders including asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome, menstrual pain, sinus disorders and migraines. A study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1999 reported that patients receiving OMT for low back pain required significantly less medication and less physical therapy than those who didn't receive OMT.

D.O.s are fully licensed physicians able to prescribe medication and perform surgery. They treat people, not just symptoms.

To learn more about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit the American Osteopathic Association's Web site at www.aoa-net.org or call toll-free 1-800-621-1773.