

Back Pain

Survey Reveals Myths About Back Pain

(NAPSA)—People are so afraid of being told they will need surgery that they may not seek even the most basic help for their back pain.

That's a key finding of a recent member survey of an organization dedicated to improving spine care—the North American Spine Society (NASS).

“It is heartbreaking to see that myths and an unnecessary fear of surgery are holding people back from getting even the most conservative help for their back pain,” said Joseph Cheng, MD, MS, associate professor of Neurological Surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and NASS Public Affairs Committee chair.

Most Don't Need Surgery

According to Cheng, the vast majority (90 percent) of people with back pain will get better without treatment or by using conservative treatments, such as anti-inflammatory medication, exercise, coping skills and physical therapy.

Spine surgery is recommended in only about 1 percent of cases, with very specific diagnoses, after a more conservative course of treatment already has been tried.

Back Pain Myths

Despite these facts, patient concerns about potential surgery came up many times throughout the “9 for Spine” survey results. The survey shows that 66 percent of spine specialists surveyed believe that fear of possible treatments, including surgery, keeps their patients from seeking help for back pain.

Many of their patients believe the myth that once you have spine surgery, you are destined to have multiple spine surgeries. The survey also found that over 12 percent of patients wait more than 90



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days from the onset of their back pain to seek help from a spine specialist—far longer than the recommended four to six weeks.

Preventing Back Pain

When asked what advice they would offer their patients to prevent back pain, 76 percent of the specialists surveyed stressed the importance of regular exercise and nearly 50 percent urged patients not to smoke.

Said Dr. Cheng, “Right at the top of the list are common sense things like exercising regularly, not smoking, maintaining a healthy body weight and using proper body posture and mechanics when using electronic gadgets or lifting heavy objects.”

The North American Spine Society's 6,500 members are dedicated to providing the highest-quality spine care.

To learn more about back pain myths and caring for your back, visit www.knowyourback.org.