

health and wellness *Getting Relief From* **LOW BACK PAIN**

By **Jason Taub**, Resident

Low back pain is a potentially immobilizing condition that is experienced by approximately 80% of the population at some point in their lives. It is the leading cause of activity restriction and missed days from work. Fortunately, it is often temporary and can be greatly improved over time with appropriate management.

As a neurosurgeon, I've found that patients are often hesitant to be evaluated in my office. They are afraid that if they visit me, I will recommend surgical intervention. However, an overwhelmingly large percentage of my patients will never "go under the knife" for their pain. In actuality, I recommend surgery to fewer than ten percent of my patients.

A thorough history combined with a detailed physical exam will help direct the initial treatment. Imaging studies may be recommended depending on the duration of pain, related symptoms, and associated exam findings. The use of non-narcotic medications, such as anti-inflammatories, can be offered to help decrease the intensity of the pain.

The vast majority of my patients will experience relief from low back pain from non-surgical management. After an initial evaluation, I often recommend physical therapy, home exercises, chiropractic interventions, and/or activity modifications to relieve pain.

If the pain persists or is severe on presentation, I may refer my patients to a pain management

physician for consideration of directed steroid injections. I work with the pain physician to tailor the injection to the patient, targeting the epicenter of pain. A common misconception is that a referral to a pain physician will involve the prescription of narcotics, however this is very infrequently the case.

After the failure of all nonsurgical options, surgical intervention might be part of the treatment algorithm. I always focus on finding the smallest operation that will provide the most symptomatic relief. Minimally invasive techniques, early return to activity, a better understanding of spine and body biomechanics, as well as improved technology have all led to shorter recovery times and improved outcomes. Many of my procedures are performed on an outpatient basis, which typically does not even require a hospital stay. My patients also find a decreased need for future related surgeries, which is a common concern among surgical candidates.

So how do we avoid back pain, or the recurrence thereof? While there is no



easy answer, the avoidance of undue stress on the lower back is critical. Moreover, keeping fit and staying healthy has been shown to help prevent pain and to speed up the recovery following an injury. Lifestyle choices such as a well-balanced diet combined with frequent exercise are vital to staying pain-free. If you are experiencing low back pain, consulting with a spine surgeon can often be the first step on the road to a speedy recovery.

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A promotional advertisement for Pool Scouts. It features a young girl in a colorful swimsuit jumping into a swimming pool. The background is a lush green lawn. The text includes the Pool Scouts logo, the slogan "FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR POOL ALL OVER AGAIN", and a promotion: "GET A COMPLIMENTARY POOL CLEANING YOUR 4TH VISIT IS FREE WITH NEW WEEKLY SERVICE - CODE: FALL21". At the bottom, it provides the website "POOLSCOUTS.COM/NORTHDALLAS-PARKCITIES" and the phone number "972-685-1636".

A promotional advertisement for N2GIVES. It features a dark purple background with a white icon of a hand holding a heart. The text reads: "THIS BUSINESS FIGHTS HUMAN TRAFFICKING" and "N2GIVES.COM".