



## What causes it?

Back pain is the leading cause of disability for Americans under the age of 45. Studies show that 80% of adults in America will experience low back pain at some point in their lives. The causes of back pain are as varied as the types of symptoms you may experience. Symptoms can be a result of poor muscle tone, muscle tension or spasms, ligament tears, degenerative arthritis, nerve or disc problems.

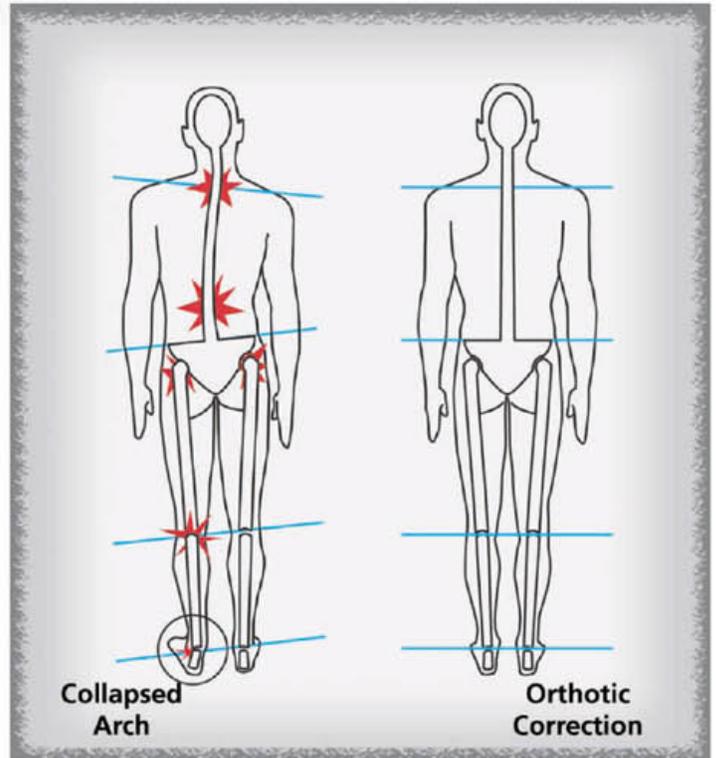
Low back pain can be a result of an acute injury, but many times back problems develop over a long period of time. Factors such as age, occupation, poor posture and overall fitness all play a role. The body needs a sound support structure to carry weight and perform normal activities. When this support structure is weakened, the body must work harder to keep the feet, knees, hips and low back functioning properly. Over time, this can lead to back problems.

## Is my back pain related to my feet?

In many cases, yes. Your feet are the foundation for every step you take. They play a key role in absorbing the shock that you place on your body every day. Problems with the function of your feet can have repercussions that are felt all the way up, including your knees, hips and back.

When your arches raise and lower (which is a normal part of walking) the bones of your leg and thigh rotate inwards and outwards. When there is a problem with your feet (such as pronation or flattening of the arches), this rotation of your leg bones can become excessive – leading to increased stress on the knee, pelvis and low back. You may have noticed that your low back pain is worse in different shoes, or that walking in bare feet makes your back hurt. This may be an

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indication that your feet are contributing to your back pain.

## How is it treated?

Treatment for low back pain is as varied as the number of causes. It is very important that you understand the cause of your symptoms before undergoing treatment for your back pain. Here are some of the more common treatments:

**Anti-Inflammatory Agents:** These may include ice and oral anti-inflammatory medications. These may provide some temporary relief from the pain of inflammation, but are usually not helpful in addressing the underlying cause of your condition. In limited

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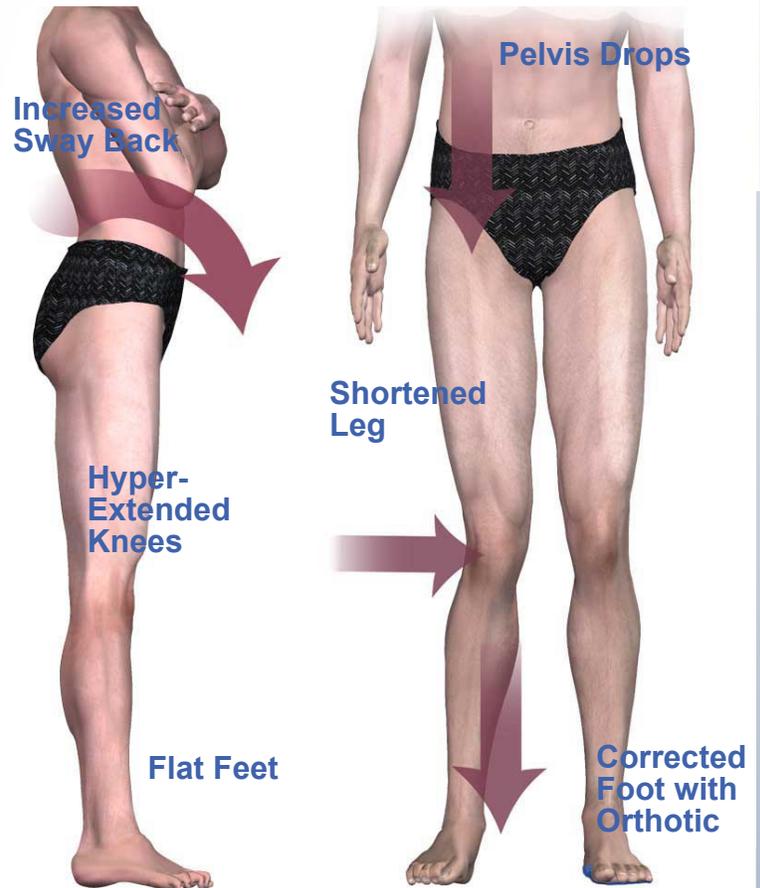
amounts, rest may help reduce inflammation as well. Heat can be used with some effect when your symptoms are primarily a result of muscle tightness.

**Conservative Therapies:** There is evidence that back pain is often best treated with conservative measures initially. These treatments can include chiropractic, physical therapy and acupuncture. The source of back pain is often the muscles and joints in the back, which may respond to these interventions. Regardless of the type of treatment you are receiving, a good stretching and strengthening protocol can help you get better results.

**Injections:** Depending on the cause of your pain, this intervention may be considered. There are many different types of injectational therapies including facet joints injections, trigger point injections and epidural injections. With this treatment, a steroid is injected into the area of pain and is designed to quickly reduce inflammation and decrease pain. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of this treatment.

**Surgery:** In cases of severe injury, unrelenting and usually down-the-leg pain or in cases that do not respond to conservative measures, your doctor may recommend surgery. Surgery is often designed to take pressure off of damaged tissues and fuse areas of instability. As with other treatments, the reason why the tissues were damaged in the first place should be considered. If you are considering surgery, talk to your doctor carefully about the benefits and risks.

**Foot Orthotics:** For back pain that is, at least partially, caused by poor biomechanics of the feet, good orthotic management is a treatment of choice. By correcting faulty or excessive motions in the feet, the posture and alignment of the lower body can be normalized.



This can greatly alleviate unnecessary stress to areas of your low back. It is a simple yet profound therapy, easily performed by just standing and walking properly, and easily combined with other kinds of treatment.

*Sole Supports*<sup>™</sup> custom made orthotics are uniquely designed to directly and completely support and restore the arch of your foot. This not only helps correct low back posture, but restores proper function for prolonged, pain-free foot health that benefits the legs as well. It may be the difference between long-term success and failure in the management of your low back pain.

*This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your health care provider.*