

Non-surgical Treatment of the Spine

How Does a Good Diagnosis Help?

Any treatment's effectiveness depends on beginning with an accurate diagnosis of the particular problem and an understanding of the cause of the pain. Our team will make every effort to arrive at the appropriate diagnosis for the pain you are experiencing. As a key member of the team, your input is crucial. Here's how you can help:

Providing a good history – Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- How did the pain start?
- Where does it hurt?
- How long have you been experiencing the pain?
- Describe the pain. Is it sharp, burning, dull, achy, or throbbing?
- What kinds of activities or positions make it worse? What makes it feel better?

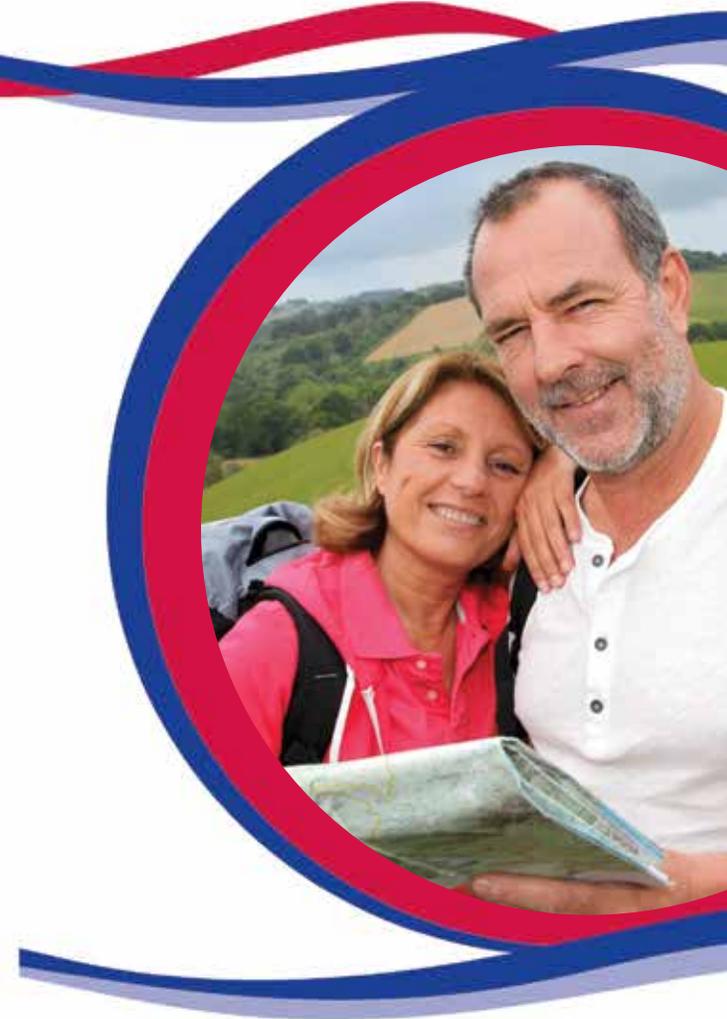
Using a Pain Log – During your treatment, you may be asked to keep a daily pain log. A daily pain log is a simple tool to help keep track of the effectiveness of your treatment. The pain log includes a scale that you will use to help identify what is working and what isn't. This information is very helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of treatments and medications.

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What if I Have Other Questions?

Just give us a call. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have. And be sure to ask us about our upcoming seminars on back and neck pain – we'd love to see you!

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What is Non-surgical Treatment?

Non-surgical treatment of the spine, sometimes referred to as “conservative” treatment is used to describe any treatment or therapy that does not involve surgery. In fact, the vast majority of back or neck problems are successfully resolved with treatments or therapies that do not involve surgical procedures. For example, treatment may be as simple as reassurance that the problem is not serious and all that is needed is to refrain from certain activity while the body heals. Other non-surgical treatments include preventative measures, such as learning to protect the spine when lifting and doing exercises to strengthen it. The goal of any treatment – conservative or surgical – is to reduce pain, limit further degeneration, and get you back to your activities as soon as possible.

What Conditions can be Treated Non-surgically?

As mentioned, most back and neck problems can be treated conservatively. In fact, surgery is not considered until non-surgical or conservative treatments

have failed to provide relief or in circumstances that neurological defects are inevitable without surgery. Symptoms such as headaches, sciatica, and pain in the neck, arm, and lower back can often be successfully treated by non-surgical measures. These symptoms are most often caused by conditions such as disc herniation, muscle strains, arthritis, and spinal stenosis.

What are Some of the Types of Non-surgical Treatments?

There are many types of non-surgical treatments available today, and of course your particular diagnosis will determine which treatments may be recommended. Non-surgical treatments include:

Physical Therapy – Physical therapy can help you stretch, strengthen and exercise your back or neck in ways that can relieve discomfort and help prevent future episodes of pain. Physical therapists can educate you on proper ways to move, how to maintain correct posture, as well as the anatomy of the spine. They also work with your doctor to determine if other treatments such as heat, ultrasound, spinal traction, electrical stimulation, or spinal manipulation may be helpful.

Epidural Steroid Injections – Epidural steroid injections (ESI) involve an injection of steroid and anesthetic directly into the area of inflamed nerves in the back. This inflammation is usually the result of nerve compression caused by a

narrowed spinal canal (spinal stenosis) or a herniated disc. The anesthetic acts to block the pain while the steroid works to reduce inflammation. The injections are generally done on an outpatient basis and take about 15 to 30 minutes to administer. While the injections can offer short or medium term relief, they do not “cure” the underlying problem. They can ease symptoms while you undergo a physical therapy program or consider surgical options.

Facet Joint Injections – Facet joints are the small joints between vertebrae along the back of the spine. Facet injections can be used to either help confirm or deny the location and source of the pain, or they can be used to reduce inflammation and possibly offer long term relief.

Are there Alternative Therapies?

Many people find relief of their back and neck pain through the use of alternative therapies. Activities such as yoga, massage, acupuncture, herbal medicines, guided imagery and cognitive behavioral therapy help relieve stress and tension that can aggravate back and neck pain.

