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## Oklahoma Interventional Pain Management

### LOW BACK PAIN

#### WHAT IS LOW BACK PAIN?

Back pain can develop for many reasons. It can range from a dull, annoying ache to severe agony. It can occur at any point on the spine. However, the most common site for pain is the lower back because it bears the majority of weight.

Many people suffer from low back pain. It is the second most common pain complaint – after headache. Over 80% of the American population has had back pain at some time in their lives. About 70% of people with back pain recover within one month.

#### WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF LOW BACK PAIN?

The exact cause of low back pain can be found in very few people. Only about 10% of back pain is caused by a specific illness. Most low back pain is caused by factors ranging from injuries, to the effects of aging.

#### LOW BACK SPRAIN AND STRAIN

The muscles of the lower back provide power and strength for activities such as standing, walking and lifting. A strain of the muscle can occur when the muscle is poorly conditioned or overworked. The ligaments of the lower back connect the five vertebral bones together and provide stability for the low back. A sprain of the lower back can occur when a sudden forceful movement injures a ligament that has become stiff or weak through poor conditioning or overuse. Improper or excess lifting or twisting may cause strains or spasms of the muscles that support the back.

Muscle spasm may occur after a back injury. Spasm is your back's response to injury. It is designed to immobilize you and prevent further damage. Poor posture also adds stress. When you slouch or stand with a swayback, you exaggerate your back's natural curves. Any imbalance can stress muscles and joints, causing fatigue and injury from overuse. These sprains and strains are the most common causes of low back pain.

#### AGE

The effects of aging, known as degeneration or "wear and tear," can cause the vertebral discs to disintegrate and cause inflammation in the small joints. When severe, these changes can cause stiffness and pain. Bone spurs and inflamed joints can cause nerve irritation and leg pain. Almost everyone develops "wear and tear" changes in their low back as they age, although for most people it causes little pain or loss of function.

One natural effect of normal aging is decreased amount of bone. This is known as osteoporosis. Aging can also cause the discs between the bones in your spine to become dry and hard, which causes the spine to stiffen, leading to pain and discomfort. With age, there is also a decrease in the strength and elasticity of muscle and ligaments.