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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Another Cause of Back Pain

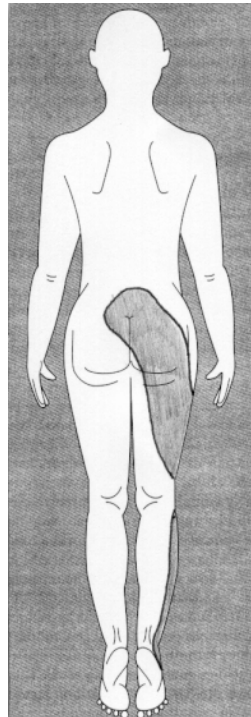
There are many causes of acute or chronic low back pain other than the infamous "herniated or slipped disk" that so many people dread. One of the more common causes is a sprained or injured "facet joint". There are two of these facet joints between each of the "vertebrae" or bones of the spine. If you counted all the facet joints starting at the skull and finishing at the pelvis, the total would come to 48. This highly flexible structure is the reason why you are able to bend your back and neck in all directions. However, with the good comes the bad. By this I mean that with the amazing mobility of the spine also comes the potential for problems in the individual joints if they are exposed to too much pressure or stress. Sitting too much, standing too long, lifting heavily, or even lifting lightly but repetitively are some of the stresses I am talking about.

The very bottom pair of facet joints, at the "L-5" vertebrae, is where the flexible spine attaches to the fairly immobile or stable pelvic bones. For this reason, this pair of facet joints often take the brunt of the physical stress you expose yourself to every day. This is why if you have a sprain or strain anywhere in your spine, it will most likely occur at this exact area.

When any joint is injured, it becomes very stiff or tight. Inflammation or swelling is almost always present in and around the joint. The spinal nerves that exit the spine are situated directly beside the inflamed and stiff joints. Due to this close proximity, they often become "irritated". Since these nerves control the activity or contraction of the muscles in your low back, they can make these muscles go into painful spasms. Chiropractors call this scenario a "subluxation" and they are specifically trained to treat it.

If you had sprained facet joints at the lower part (lumbar region) of your spine, you would be experiencing some fairly specific symptoms. Since the joints are stiff and the muscles are in spasm, you would not be able to bend forward or backward very far without experiencing sharp pain or a "giving out" sensation.

You may feel an ache or burning pain in one of your buttocks, thighs, lower legs, and even as far down as the ankle or foot (see diagram). Getting up after sitting or lying down could be quite painful. Light walking or a hot shower may make it feel a little better for a short period of time. If you undress and look in the mirror, you may notice how the left and right sides of your pelvis and torso are not level. You may find it easier to sleep on a hard surface, such as the floor, with your knees up.



If you have had or are presently experiencing symptoms such as these, see a chiropractor right away. He or she will restore the movement or mobility to the joints by doing “adjustments”, also called “manipulation” by some. Once the joint can move freely, the swelling or inflammation can be flushed out and removed. The irritation of the neighboring nerves will decrease and the spasm of the muscles will dissipate. The longer you wait to address the problem, the more chronic the injury can become, and the longer it will take to fix it. One final note, if you feel you are losing bowel and bladder control, head to emergency right away.