

Smoking and Back Pain

Did you know?

Fact: Smokers are up to 2.7 times more likely to develop low back pain compared to non-smokers

Fact: Smokers are more likely to develop low back pain as they get older

Fact: Women smokers are more likely to develop low back pain than men who smoke

Fact: Smoking is also blamed for the decay of spinal disks

Smoking and its effect on back nutrition

Smoking causes decreased nutrition to the tissues of the back largely because of the carbon monoxide that cigarette smoke contains. In large amounts, carbon monoxide is a very poisonous substance. It is also a very dangerous chemical in the form of cigarette smoke. Carbon monoxide causes problems when it sticks to the hemoglobin (the oxygen carrying part of the blood), thus decreasing the amount of oxygen to the muscles, bones, ligaments and tendons of the back. Oxygen is an essential nutrient in the healing process of the tissues of the back and must be present in order to achieve a full recovery.



Smokers also expose themselves to nicotine found in cigarettes. Nicotine is known to cause thickening of the walls of the blood vessels. This thickening contributes to restricted blood flow through the large and small blood vessels of the lower back and increases the amount of time for healing and recovery if you have a back injury.

Smoking and your spine

- Discs do not have a direct blood supply and depend upon the movement of the body to push oxygen and nutrients to them. So stay active!
- If discs do not get their needed nutrients, they can eventually develop cracks which can eventually lead to ruptures.
- Because of the decreased nutrition and blood supply to all parts of the body, smokers have a greater than average risk of fracturing their hips, wrist and spine.

Our recommendation: Stop Smoking

- Even veteran smokers have shown a marked decrease in back pain and further disc damage after quitting.
- Cutting down on smoking can also decrease the chance of developing back problems and can restore good blood flow.
- After only 48 hours of not smoking, nerve endings of the back will start to re-grow with the increased blood flow.