

Understanding Back Pain

Behavior and Pain

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Back pain can cause psychological stress, which sets in motion a variety of behaviors and coping mechanisms in response to the pain. One of the most common consequences is that the individual in pain will limit their movement in an attempt to reduce pain but also to avoid further pain. The guarded movement is accomplished by reducing their range of voluntary movement, avoiding certain activities and postures and by simply slowing the speed of their actions down.

The individual with neck or back pain may also limit their physical and social activities in an attempt to avoid the possibility of pain. If they believe that their pain is associated with tissue damage or the risk for further injury the pain will have a much greater impact on their activity level and social interaction. More often than not the individual with back pain will limit themselves physically and socially. This can lead to social isolation and depression. It can also lead to adverse tissue deconditioning and atrophy. The loss of back muscle strength and increased muscle tension can cause abnormal postural and walking patterns (gait). Muscle deconditioning and weakness often contributes to more tissue vulnerability to microtrauma and progression of pain intensity.

Everyone who has a known spine disorder or who suffers from acute or chronic back pain needs to take the time to learn more about their back and their condition. They need to see a spine specialist who can determine whether their condition requires treatment, special attention, special precautions or activity modification. Very often the person experiencing pain will think the worst, and modify their behavior thus unnecessarily limiting their lives.