



Nick Conquest

Traditional Chinese Medicine Newsletter

Lower Back Ache

Lower back ache is a common complaint which many of us experience at some point. Lower back ache can vary from general stiffness and discomfort to sharp debilitating pain.

Lower Back Ache Causes

Muscular Skeletal Injury

Lumbar muscle strains can occur after being fixed in a position for a long period i.e. a long drive or flight, or a repetitive action of bending and twisting which fatigues the muscles.

Minor lower back muscle strain will usually respond favourably to moderate stretching and rest. If this is the case and the discomfort improves, it is a good indication the lower back ache will resolve without further intervention.

Severe sharp pain which restricts movement or affects the quality of sleep reflects a more serious injury. Sharp pain is caused by soft tissue tears and muscle spasm.

If the pain refers into the hip or down a leg, it could be caused by a significant muscle spasm or a disc bulge in the lumbar spine. Referred pain is caused by pressure on a lumbar nerve root; lumbar nerves exit the spine and supply the lower limbs with muscle activation and sensation. Pressure on a nerve root will usually be caused by a bulging disc or muscle spasm.

Treatment

As previously mentioned, lower back muscle strain may not need significant treatment. But a muscle/soft tissue tear or a disc protrusion will certainly need some help.

Massage with therapeutic stretching will assist with easing spasm and directing blood flow to a damaged area.

Acupuncture is based on the concept of energy or Qi flowing through the body in different pathways or channels. After an injury, regardless of the cause, the body's Qi will block or stagnate. To manage pain and discomfort and encourage the quickest recovery, it is

crucial to promote the flow of Qi. Acupuncture will do this by using acupuncture points to access the relevant channels holding the Qi, thereby reducing swelling, pain and improving joint mobility. Usually combined with therapeutic massage, acupuncture is extremely effective in treating all types of lower back ache. It will not only treat soft tissue injuries but assist with nerve irritation and joint damage.

Safety tips to help save your back

- Picking up heavy objects whilst bending and twisting, **get closer and bend your knees**
- Prolonged periods in front of the computer with poor posture, **get up and move it**
- Sitting in a chair with your feet up higher than your hips, **lying on the couch is better**
- Hard physical training when fatigued, **listen to your body**

Kidney Qi Deficiency

From a Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective, the Kidneys will often cause lower back ache. The Kidneys store the body's essence or constitutional Qi. The state of someone's Kidney Qi will reflect their overall health and vitality. Hard physical labour, prolonged stress, excessive alcohol, drugs or sexual activity will certainly drain the bodies Kidney Qi. Apart from feeling extremely fatigued, a common symptom of weak Kidney Qi is lower back ache. This ache is deep in sensation and will only temporarily respond to treatment. To nourish and strengthen the kidneys a combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine will be appropriate. Herbal medicine can be taken daily to strengthen the body and dissipate the deep seated ache.

Foods which help nourish the Kidneys

- Walnuts
- Sweet potato
- Black sesame
- Chinese Wolfberries (Go Qi Zi berries)



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