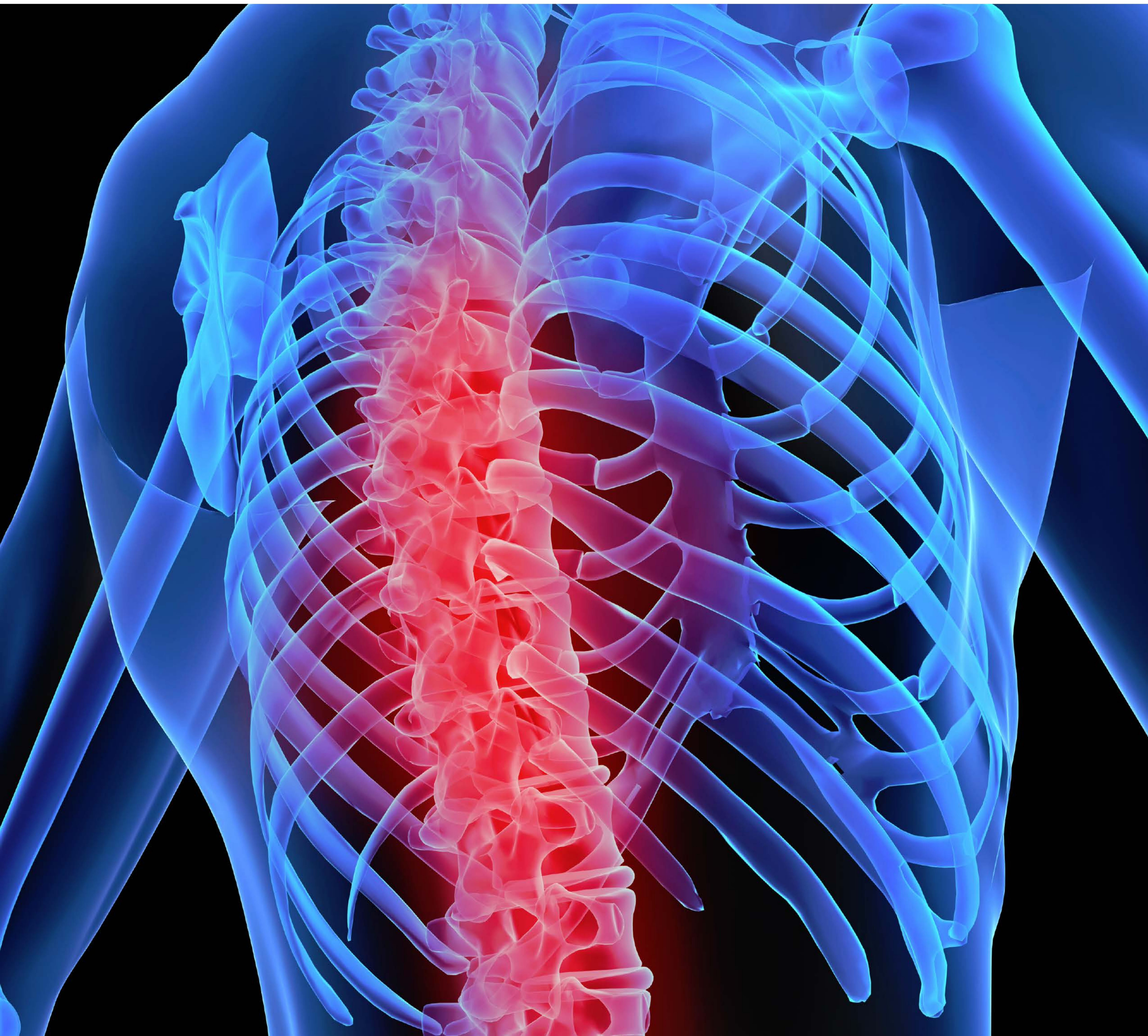


5 Myths about Back Pain Treatment to Avoid



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Back pain is one of the most common medical complaints today; it's also one of the hardest conditions to treat. A lack of understanding of back pain causes in the medical community isn't the only thing to blame for this, however; misconceptions on the part of patients themselves can hinder effective back pain treatment. If you have back pain, take care to avoid the following errors when seeking diagnosis and treatment.

Back pain is common, so it's nothing to worry about.

If you performed strenuous activity yesterday and feel muscle aches today, then there probably isn't anything to worry about. But if you feel constant or recurring back pain, there is a problem. Chronic back pain is not a rare condition, but that doesn't make it okay. Obesity is becoming normal, but that doesn't make it healthy, right? Back pain conditions may be progressive; without identifying the cause (for example, harmful movement patterns), you may be perpetuating it. An occasional nagging pain can become a chronic condition if left untreated.

If the doctor can't find anything wrong, I must be fine.

Unfortunately, your average medical doctor is not trained to identify all causes of back pain. This is why, according to Uptodate.com, approximately 85% of back pain cases go undiagnosed. Unless you have a spinal problem that shows up on imaging tests, which most people don't, you can't count on a diagnosis. This doesn't mean that nothing is wrong. You may have a chronic injury to the muscles or connective tissues. Most doctors aren't aware of these types of dysfunction and therefore don't know how to look for them and treat them. If you have undiagnosed back pain, seek out a physical therapist or massage therapist trained to identify soft tissue causes of back pain.

If it hurts, don't do it.

This one is tricky since it's true to an extent. If you have chronic back pain, rugby might not be for you. However, for many people with persistent back pain everything from exercising to simply getting out of bed can be painful. Unless you have a severe spinal injury that requires immobility, prolonged

bed rest is detrimental. Some pain and discomfort may be necessary to get moving, and that doesn't mean you shouldn't move.

Take arthritis, for example. Most people with arthritis experience the most pain and stiffness after a period of immobility. Getting moving is difficult for these people, but motion will lubricate their joints and reduce pain. Finding ways to move that are manageable is the most important thing to do. Exercising in the water is beneficial to most people with back pain as it relieves stress from the back while still providing resistance.

Yoga is for the spiritual and/or hyper-flexible.

Banish any generalizations you have about yoga in your head aside from the use of poses. There are dozens of types of yoga, each of which emphasizes something different. Traditionally, yoga involves a spiritual component, but throughout the years new forms have evolved that focus on rehabilitative exercise for back pain. You don't have to be a contortionist to benefit from yoga, either – you're always encouraged to move slowly and safely within your own flexibility level.

A number of studies attest to yoga's effectiveness as a back pain treatment. One study, a discussion of which can be found at www.sciencedaily.com, compares people with recurrent back pain who sought either conventional treatment or yoga for their back pain. The yoga group saved money and had a third less sick days from work due to back pain than the other group. Believing that yoga is "just not for you" may be keeping you from a helpful resource.

Chiropractors are quacks.

This prejudice against chiropractic doctors extends back to the second half of the 20th century before the American Medical Association gave chiropractic medicine the stamp of legitimacy in the 1980's. It is one of the only forms of alternative medicine that mainstream medical culture views as scientifically proven today, yet some still maintain its fraudulence.

Like any form of treatment, chiropractic won't work for everyone. However, if you have joint problems in the back or hips, you will likely find chiropractic care helpful. The manipulation techniques employed by chiropractors go

beyond cracking your back; they can realign joints. If you want a more holistic approach to your treatment in general, consider seeing an osteopathic doctor. This type of doctor is similar to an M.D. but is trained in manipulation techniques as well.

Spinal manipulation can relieve pain, reduce the cost of your overall treatment, and reduce the number of sick days you take from work due to back pain.