

Up Front Treatment For Mid-Back Pain

By Tracy Porpora

It may have started when you lifted that heavy box, or hoisted your oversized luggage into the cab. Or maybe it stems from years of incorrect posture that was further hindered by slumping in front of a computer screen for eight hours each day. These are just a few simple ways people incur a mid-back injury that can lead to extreme pain in the thoracic area of the spine. However, the good news is that with long-term chiropractic care, mid-back pain can be kept under control.

HASTE CAN COST YOU

"Mid-back pain can be caused by anything from a car accident to a back strain, which refers pain into the middle back. You often feel pain between the shoulder blades. A lot of times mid-back pain can come when people try to do too much too fast, such as if they start a new exercise workout routine all at once," says Dr. James Spennetta, a chiropractor with a private practice, Spennetta Family Care Chiropractic, in Madison, WI. "In many cases, a mid-back injury will be there for quite a while before a patient will feel pain."

THE AGING PROCESS

In addition, aging spinal degeneration can play a big role in

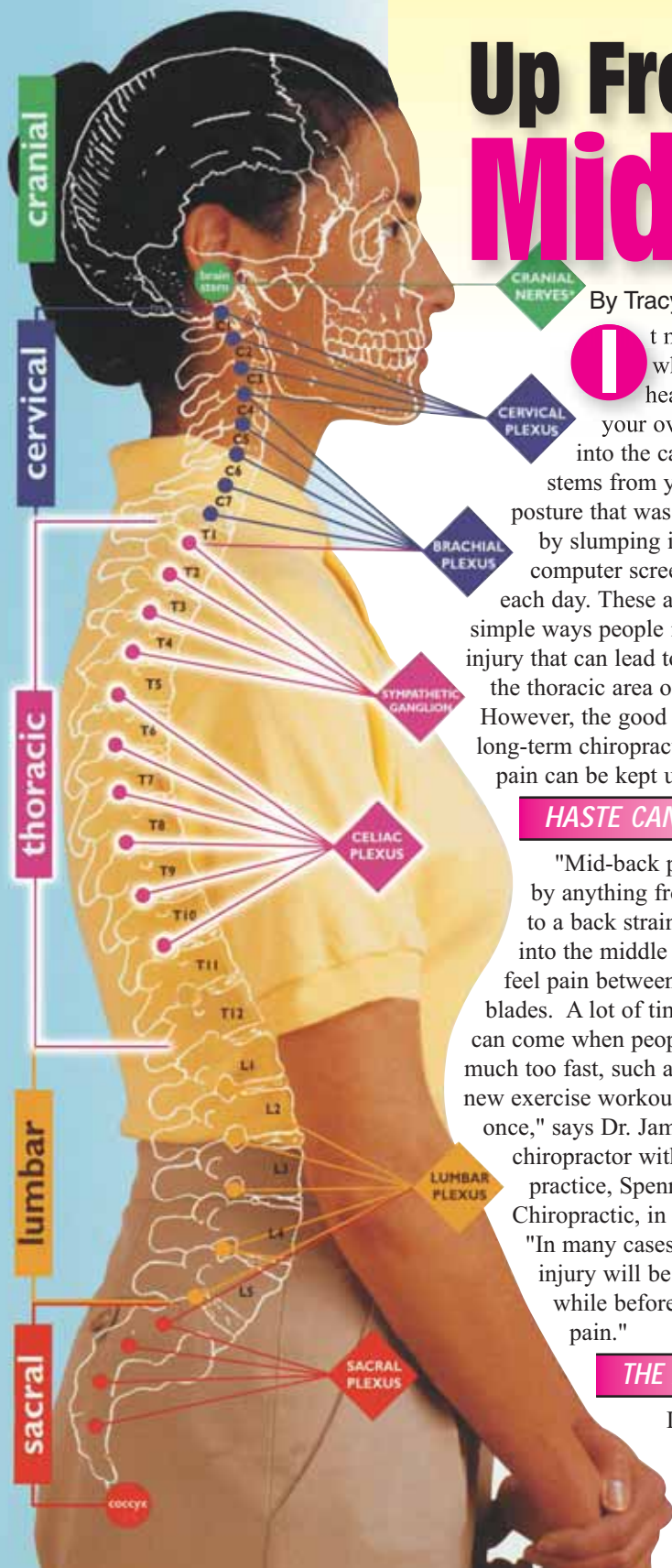
mid-back pain. "Osteoporosis is a common cause of mid-back pain in the elderly population, and can lead to fracture and vertebral body deformities," explains Dr. Karl S. Forgeron, a chiropractor with a private practice, Streamwood Family Chiropractic, in Streamwood, IL. He notes that 80% of the population suffers from back pain at some point in their lives. "Misalignments over time can lead to accelerated degenerative joint and disc disease," he continues. "The best analogy is that of a car tire. If one were to drive the car with the wheels out of alignment, then the tire tread would eventually wear out. The same thing happens to the spine."

BE LEVEL-HEADED

Poor posture is another culprit that causes mid-back pain. "It started when you were a kid, and your mom kept telling you to sit up straight," says Dr. Matt French, a chiropractor with a private practice, Gonstead Family Chiropractic, in Phoenix, AZ. "Take measures to make your posture better. Ideally, we want to keep our head as centered over our spine as possible. The further forward our head starts to tilt, the more strain it puts on the neck and thoracic spine."

A BALANCING ACT

Effective chiropractic treatment for mid-back pain often starts with spinal manipulation. "Adjustments for the thoracic spine are one of the most effective treatments for that area," says French. "We can address muscular





"I recommend what I like to call 'the door stretch,'" says French. "You put each of your forearms on each side of the door, then stretch your body through. As for exercises, I recommend that people put their arms to their sides making a large T. Then, what you do is imagine there is a pencil directly between your shoulder blades, and you're trying to pinch that pencil. So you're bringing your scapular or shoulder blades together, and you hold that in an isometric position for a count of 5 to 10, then relax."

Chiropractors say it's important that each exercise to treat mid-back injuries be tailored to the individual who is suffering from the pain, says Spennetta. "One exercise for the back can be done by kneeling on one side of the bed, with one leg on the floor while you lift a weight in a rowing motion. Then you squeeze your shoulder blades in at the top to get a good contraction of the shoulder muscle groups that attach to the upper back," he says.

IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING CHIROPRACTIC CARE

Many chiropractors say adopting chiropractic into your lifestyle can help keep mid-back injuries under control, and prevent further damage from occurring. "Ongoing [chiropractic] care, in my opinion, is essential for optimal health and wellness," says Forgeron. "People go to their dentists to prevent tooth decay. They might as well see a chiropractor on a regular basis to prevent spinal decay or degeneration."

Because most mid-back problems develop over a period of time, ongoing chiropractic is an essential element to keeping mid-back pain at a minimum, or reducing it to non-existence. **"Typically, mid-back problems stem from our lifestyle, our work habits, postural habits, the way we sleep, etc. Ongoing care is one step you can make toward undoing all of that damage we constantly do to ourselves," says French.**

issues, as well as muscle imbalances. Typically, people are very much imbalanced because their dominant side is more developed, or stronger than their non-dominant side. We want to stretch the shoulders to help keep the shoulders

up and back, and not rolling forward."

IT'S A STRETCH

Home exercises that can help strengthen back muscles are another effective way to treat mid-back injuries.