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Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—  
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Moreton & Company.

# Breaking Your Back? Part 1

## *Understand the causes of your back pain*

Back pain can range from a dull, constant ache to a sudden, sharp pain that causes incapacitation. It can come on suddenly – from an accident, a fall, or lifting something too heavy – or it can develop slowly, perhaps as the result of age-related changes to the spine.

### **Risks and Causes**

Anyone can experience back pain. There are risk factors that can increase the chances of developing episodes of acute or chronic back pain:

- **Age** – Back pain becomes more common with age.
- **Fitness level** – Back pain is more common among people who are not physically fit, as weak back and abdominal muscles may not properly support the spine. Additionally, “weekend warriors” – people who go out and exercise a lot after being inactive all week – are more likely to suffer painful back injuries than people who make moderate physical activity a daily habit.
- **Diet** – A diet high in calories and fat, combined with an inactive lifestyle,

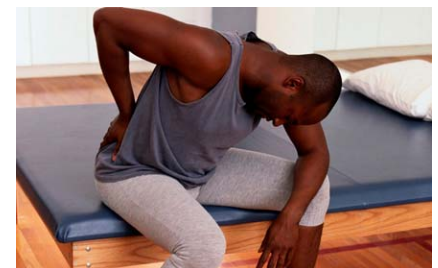
can lead to obesity, which puts additional stress on the back.

- **Heredity** – Some causes of back pain, including disc disease, may have a genetic component.
- **Race** – Race can be a factor in back problems. African-American women, for example, are more likely to develop spondylolisthesis, a condition in which a vertebra of the lower spine – also called the lumbar spine – slips out of place.
- **Disease** – Many diseases can cause or contribute to back pain, including various forms of arthritis and cancer elsewhere in the body that may spread to the spine.
- **Occupation** – Having a job that requires heavy lifting, pushing or pulling – particularly when involving twisting or vibrating the spine – can lead to injury and back pain. An inactive job or a desk job may also lead to or contribute to pain, especially with poor posture or

having to sit all day in an uncomfortable chair.

- **Smoking** – Smoking can lead to back pain by blocking the body’s ability to deliver nutrients to the discs of the lower back, as well as by straining muscles caused by repeated coughing associated with heavy smoking. In addition, smoking slows healing and prolongs pain for people who have had a back injury, back surgery or broken bones.

Understanding the causes associated with the development of your back pain are your first steps to its prevention and effective treatment.



### **Did you know...?**

Back pain is the second most common symptom encountered by doctors in the United States. It ranks only second to the common cold as a reason for office visits and missed time from work. As a health problem, it is the third most expensive disorder, after heart disease and cancer.