Are Back Pain and Constipation Related?

by JEREMY ETHIER

Can Constipation Cause Back Pain?

When we think of back pain, we often think of muscle tightness, imbalances, nerve pressure, and so on. But what about the lesser known causes of back pain? One such cause is constipation.

Soreness and pain in the lower back can be linked to constipation, and not just severe constipation. In many cases, even minor constipation causes back pain which can last until your constipation is relieved.

Does Constipation Cause Back Pain?

I'm sure everyone knows the idea behind constipation – it occurs from obstructions in your system or from the slow transit time of waste material passing through the colon.

When back pain is experienced along with constipation, it is usually constipation is to blame. The pain starts when defecation is halted due to a blockage. Although defecation stops, the traffic in the intestine does not, which makes the blockage worse over time.

Once the blockage has reached a point where it becomes significantly backed up and clogged, pressure on the lower back can increase and result in pain.

Since the body will continue producing waste despite this, the pain can increase and last for a long time until the blockage is cleared. This becomes even more of a problem when those who are constipated start treating their back pain, not knowing constipation and back pain are interrelated.

By straining your body further and putting more pressure on the back with foam rolling techniques and myofascial release, you can create more pressure and cause additional pain which is why constipation needs to be treated first.

Back Pain Causing Constipation?

On the other hand, back pain can also be the culprit behind constipation, which makes this situation not so clear-cut. Your back is central to your core, and most of your movement originates and is stabilized in that area.

Back pain can get to the point where it is difficult to perform simple daily tasks like getting out of bed. Given that back pain has the power to do such damage, it is probable that it could be affecting your bowel movements as well.

Sustained back injuries from trauma or improper lifting techniques can cause lower back muscle spasms that interfere with your nervous system and its role in the intestinal action that causes bowel movements.

Thus, it is difficult to say whether back pain is causing your constipation, or constipation is causing your back pain. However, if you never experienced back pain until you started experiencing constipation, then constipation is likely to blame.

Further Complications

Often those suffering from chronic back pain will be treated with medications in the form of pain relief drugs and various prescription drugs. Although this is an ideal approach to cope with back pain, many medications for back pain can also cause constipation which further complicates this problem.

Even though it is difficult to pinpoint the exact culprit of your back pain, it is safe to say that regardless of whether your constipation is causing your back pain or not.

Constipation itself is a serious problem that needs to be dealt with and if dealt with, you may see a reduction of back pain symptoms.

What Can You Do About Constipation and Back Pain?

Luckily, there are several things you can do when it comes to relieving constipation and back pain.

Increase Your Water Intake

Dehydration can make constipation worse and may be the reason why your digestion is blocked up. Current water recommendations for women is about 2.7 liters per day, and for men, it is approximately 3.7 liters per day.

Although this may sound like a lot of water to drink daily, it is necessary that you supply your body with adequate amounts of water for it to perform its bodily functions effectively, including digestion. When your body is properly hydrated, less water will be withdrawn from the colon which keeps your stool soft and easy to pass.

As you can imagine, dehydration will cause your stool to be harder and make it easier for blockages to occur. You can quickly achieve your recommended daily water intake by sipping on water throughout the day.

As soon as you get up, drink a couple of cups of water and repeat this throughout the day to try and drink at least 8 cups of water and you will quite easily reach your recommended daily water intake.

Increase Your Fiber Intake

There are two types of fiber – soluble and insoluble. Both are important for maintaining bowel movements.

Soluble fiber, in particular, helps keep stool soft because of its ability to absorb water. Whereas insoluble fiber helps add bulk to your stool and helps sweep waste material out of the intestines.

Although fiber supplements are available and there are plenty of foods enriched with fiber, the best way to increase your fiber intake is by eating more fruits and vegetables. Most fruits and vegetables contain high amounts of fiber, vitamins, and antioxidants which help with digestion.

Fruits with high fiber include:

- Apples
- Bananas
- Passionfruit
- Peaches
- Avocados
- Prunes
- Oranges

- Strawberries

Vegetables with high fiber include:

- Artichoke
- Green peas
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Potatoes with the skin
- Corn
- Carrots

Also, there are various other foods high in fiber that you should consider increasing your intake of as well. These foods include black beans, oatmeal, whole wheat bread, bran flakes, and so on.

Exercise

Being sedentary and sitting for extended periods of time can slow down your digestion and the clearance of waste within your body.

The best type of exercise when it comes to dealing with constipation and back pain is aerobic exercise. Things like walking, jogging, running, cycling, swimming, and so on are great to get you moving and increase bowel movements in your body.

Also, it will lower your stress levels through the release of endorphins in your body. Since stress plays a big role in back pain and constipation, exercise is a two-in-one solution not only for improving your digestion but also your body composition, mind, and overall health.

Other Options

Some other lifestyle options to also consider are massage therapy, cutting out a lot of junk food from your diet, taking laxatives (although it is best to consult your doctor before doing so), and taking omega-3s which help soften your stool as well to improve any blockages.

The Bottom Line...

To conclude, back pain and constipation is a serious issue in itself and is not something you should simply ignore, especially if you are experiencing back pain symptoms as well.

Although it is tough to say whether constipation is directly causing your back pain or the other way around, you want to use the tips outlined above to improve your constipation.

Once your constipation is relieved, then take note as to whether your back pain symptoms have improved or not. If over time your back pain remains, then it is likely another cause in which you will want to seek professional help.

With that being said, the tips outlined above are not only essential for constipation but are essential for overall health.

Increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables, water intake, and exercising regularly are all going to improve your quality of life and are things you should strive to improve regardless of whether you are experiencing constipation from back pain or not.