

# Cascade Quarterly News

## DISCS

### dealing with discs

“Be sure to consult your massage therapist whenever you have back pain”

Your back consists of stacked bones called vertebrae. There are discs between the vertebrae that act as shock absorbers and that allow the spine to bend. Each disc consists of a soft semi-fluid center (the nucleus) that is surrounded and held together by strong ligaments.

The discs in your spine can be the source of a great deal of back pain. This pain can range from a nagging ache and sciatic discomfort to excruciating pain that incapacitates you. There are simple measures you can take

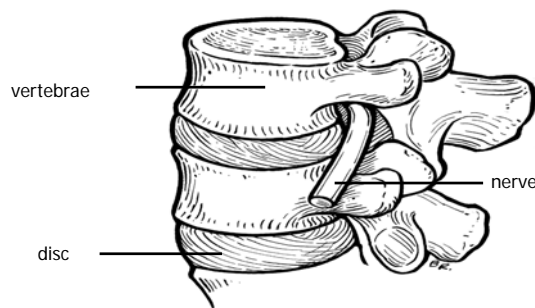
to reduce the risk of disc problems occurring and to reduce your pain once problems do occur.

To understand how disc pain often happens, it is important to understand normal posture. When standing upright there is a natural inward curve in the lower back called a lumbar lordosis. With this natural lordosis, your body weight is distributed evenly over the discs.

The lordosis is decreased whenever you slouch or bend forward. Back problems commonly develop if

you find yourself in these positions for long periods of time. This occurs because the vertebrae are placed in a position that pushes the nucleus backwards and stresses the ligaments at the back of the disc.

If the pressure on the ligaments is severe enough they may become weak and allow the soft inside part of the disc to bulge outward (prolapse) and press on the spinal nerves. This can also cause pain that refers into the buttock or down the leg.



*The disc, which sits between two vertebrae, acts like a shock absorber for the spine. Nerves come out of the spinal cord and pass through small holes behind the disc.*

## prevention is best



Ideally, you want to stop back pain from developing by taking some simple steps to reduce strain to your back.

Many chairs don't offer sufficient support for your lower back. Even well designed chairs can be used improperly. For example, many people sit in the middle of the seat and then slouch backward against the back support.

It is important to maintain the natural lordosis in your lower back while sitting. To help maintain a

healthy sitting posture, you can use a specially designed lumbar support that can be attached to your chair, or simply roll up a medium sized towel and place it between your lower back and the backrest of your seat.

As well, stand up regularly, put your hands on the back of your hips and bend backwards five or six times.

Many activities around the home like gardening, making the bed and vacuuming cause you to

stoop forward. Make sure that you stand upright occasionally and bend backwards to relieve the strain on the back ligaments. If you are doing any lifting, make sure to keep your back straight and bend from your hips and knees.

In the event that your back starts hurting be sure to see your massage therapist right away. They'll be able to assess your situation and offer treatment to help ease your discomfort.

"If you are doing any lifting, make sure to keep your back straight and bend from your hips and knees."

## Q&A: what is sciatica?

The sciatic nerve is a large nerve that begins at the base of the spine and that passes through the buttocks and continues down the back of the thigh and into the lower leg.

This nerve can become compressed or inflamed. If this occurs,

pain begins to travel down the back of your leg. This pain is referred to as "sciatica".

Sciatica can be caused by a bulging disc, arthritis of the spine, a tight piriformis muscle in your buttocks and even trigger points in your muscles.

Depending on the cause

and the severity, you could also experience numbness, tingling or weakness in the leg.

If you experience any of these symptoms, see your massage therapist as soon as possible for assessment and treatment.

## back exercises

Here are several **extension exercises** you can do to recover from low back pain, specifically acute episodes of back pain - when your back "goes out." They put the vertebrae in a position that pushes the soft centre of the disc forward so it stops pushing on the ligaments or nerves in the low back.

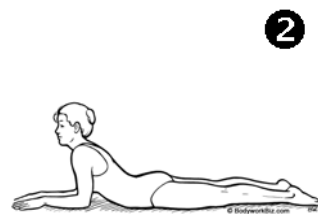
Before beginning, consult with your massage

therapist to be sure that they are appropriate for you. Do them in the order outlined. When doing these exercises you should move until you just start to feel a gentle pulling and then return to the starting position. If you do these exercises every two hours, about six to eight times per day, you should notice a significant change in pain within one to two days.

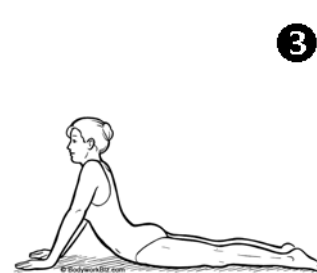
Closely observe the location and intensity of your pain. If your pain becomes less diffuse and localizes to your back or if the pain becomes less intense, you'll know these exercises are working. If the pain intensifies or starts to spread further from your spine, (especially below the knee) stop exercising and get advice from your massage therapist.



Lie face down with your head turned to the side. If your neck is uncomfortable in this position, roll up a towel and place it under your shoulders. Take deep breaths and consciously try to relax the muscles in your lower back. Stay in this position for about five minutes.



Remain face down. Place your elbows directly under your shoulders so that you are leaning on your forearms. Take deep breaths and allow your back to relax completely. Hold this position for about five minutes. This exercise should be done only once per session after Exercise 1.



Place your hands under your shoulders. Straighten your arms and push your body upwards. Let your pelvis sag and rest on the floor. Relax the muscles around your low back and hips completely. It is important that you hold this extended position for one to two seconds before you lower yourself to the starting position. If you feel that the pain is decreasing or localizing, you may hold the position for a little longer. Repeat this exercise ten times after having completed Exercise 1 and 2.

*"When doing these exercises, your low back pain should subside. If you notice that instead, your pain intensifies or starts to spread, stop the exercise and get advice from your Massage Therapist."*



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If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor.

The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.

## About Cascade Massage Therapy

### My Approach

***I bring over 12 years of bodywork experience and education to the massage table!*** I offer you diverse and comprehensive massage therapy sessions. Your treatment goals are foremost and your needs will be heard and addressed. I utilize both traditional and alternative treatment techniques, and recommend self care tips and exercise options that evolve with your individual healing process.

***My intention is to be a facilitator in the cascade of your healing process and health maintenance.*** I believe that within the human body is the desire and ability to be well, and through bodywork, I serve to act as a catalyst for this process.

***This is your time*** - I encourage you to enjoy the stillness of your session, and sense the changes occurring in your body while we work - you don't need to be entertaining or start a conversation; that being said, please recognize that I do not read minds. I expect my clients to participate in his or her experience and give feedback when there is any discomfort during the treatment.



***Cascade Massage Therapy is focused on education and prevention.*** It is important that you know what you can do to help prevent stress, tension, and pain when you are not with me. I allow for time at the end of our session to converse, suggest self care tips and exercises that would be beneficial for you, and answer any questions that you may have.

I believe that prolonged stress, whether environmental, physical or emotional is a primary factor in dis-ease and a true obstacle to healing. Therefore, ***I welcome you to a peace-filled and relaxing environment where you can experience relief from pain and tension.***

## Contact Me

To learn more about my work, I invite you to visit my website at :  
[www.cascademassagetherapy.com](http://www.cascademassagetherapy.com)

You are welcome to call me at **250-550-4727** for a **free 10 minute phone consultation.**

We can discuss your goals and I will answer any questions you may have about how Cascade Massage Therapy can benefit you.