

Why does my pain keep coming back?

Research shows that up to 80% of the population will experience back pain in their life. 60-80% of these people will experience back pain again; many of these people will develop ongoing back problems. So why does back pain keep coming back?

Let's look at one possible reason why. When people develop back pain the body has usually been under strain for some amount of time already. The pain is often the end result of weeks or months of pressure on the joints, muscles, ligaments or discs. The body is able to tolerate this strain to a certain point but if it continues for prolonged periods then the strain can start to damage tissues within the body. If the damage is large enough it will cause pain. Why? To force the body to rest and prevent any more damage from occurring. When people experience strong pain they usually do something about it. Often they modify their activities or at the very least stop doing things that cause them pain. This reduces strain on the muscles, ligaments and discs and then the pain improves. We think the problem is solved but unfortunately sometimes there are other problems lurking beneath the surface. Typically this is weak muscles, poor posture or poor exercise technique. There are many useful solutions for acute (sudden onset) pain such as medication, manipulation, massage and stretching. Unfortunately these treatments don't usually help underlying problems such as weak muscles or a poor posture. If we don't address these problems we end up in a cycle of strain, pain and treatment. After treatment we may feel a little better and then it begins again - strain, pain and then more treatment. This cycle can continue for years and eventually cause ongoing pain. So what's the solution?

Well the answer is easy in theory - strengthen up your body, improve your posture and modify activities that put strain your tissues. Unfortunately putting this all into practice is much more difficult. Making these changes often requires more than just a visit to the gym. General exercise such as swimming or running are great for your health but sometimes don't address specific areas of weakness in the spine, hips or shoulders. In fact if your body is out of balance doing these exercises can sometimes aggravate your condition. If you have ongoing pain it is therefore wise to seek advice from a health care provider to discuss your situation. Many different types of professionals can help you with this but for the purpose of this article we will specifically focus on how an Osteopath may be able to help. Osteopaths are primary healthcare providers who undergo Masters degree training in musculoskeletal rehabilitation and physical therapies. They are trained to give specific rehabilitation exercises which can help to improve the strength of your spine and joints and improve your posture. They are also trained to administer physical therapies that can help to address pain, such as manipulation, stretching and trigger point release along with treatments such as ultrasound

and muscle stimulation. This allows an Osteopath to tackle your pain with both hands on treatment and rehabilitation exercise. Using this combination is often a very effective approach. Many people have tried a 'hands on therapy only' approach and find themselves getting massage or manipulation for years on end. Many people have also tried a 'one size fits all' class at the gym and find they are not capable of doing the exercises or that it causes them too much discomfort.

An Osteopath can help you to avoid these scenarios by addressing areas of pain or restriction with physical therapy and then focusing the rehabilitation exercises specifically to suit your body. As you start feeling better an Osteopath can then progressively increase the intensity your exercises to keep improving the strength of your body. The overall aim is to give a set of exercises and activities to allow you to look after your body by yourself and allow you to spend less time getting treated and more time enjoying your life! If you are interested in this topic or have any questions feel free to contact the Shanghai East International Medical Center and talk directly with one of the practitioners.



Dr. David Jones (Australia) B.Sc., M.H.Sc., M.AOA - Osteopath

Dr. David Jones is an Australian trained Osteopath having completed a Bachelor degree in Osteopathy and a post-graduate Masters degree in Osteopathic Medicine. Before coming to Shanghai Dr. Jones worked as an Osteopath in both Melbourne and Brisbane, Australia. During this time Dr. Jones also worked in tertiary education, spending five years lecturing in health sciences whilst completing a research paper investigating the effects of spinal manipulation.

Since his arrival in Shanghai in 2007 Dr. Jones has quickly built up a large patient base treating patients with back pain, neck pain, headaches and joints pain related to both postural injuries and sporting injuries. Dr. Jones also has a special interest in treating symptoms related to vertebral discs injuries (sciatic pain, leg pain or arm pain). During treatment Dr. Jones uses a broad spectrum of techniques including spinal manipulation, joint mobilization, applied stretching, and soft tissue manipulation. He also places great importance on exercise rehabilitation, ergonomic changes and self-help exercises.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our medical staff.