

Developing a Backbone to Deal with Back Pain

Category: My Aching Back

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | December 1, 2019

Back troubles run in my family. Ma had three back surgeries, while Dad suffered from spinal stenosis. And now, at age seventy-two, back problems have become a part of my life.

At first, I attributed my back pain to poor posture. Embarrassed about being tall—5'8"—I used to walk and sit hunched over. When computers came along, I spent too much time in front of them. When I rode the stationary bicycle, I leaned too far forward to see the words in the book on the bike rack.

Maybe my back hurts because I'm getting older—and my back is aging with me. I have yet to call my primary care physician, but now that the pain is radiating from my back to my right hip and leg, I think a consultation makes sense.

While I sympathized with my parents when they complained of back pain, only now that I share that pain do I feel empathy for what they suffered. My back pain makes it difficult to stroll around the block, walk to work or usher at theatres. It makes it hard to transfer laundry from the top-loading washer to the dryer with its front-opening door. Getting an apple from the crisper at the bottom of my refrigerator is a painful exercise. Instead of falling into bed at night, I have to ease myself slowly onto the mattress to find a position that will not cause me to wince in agony.

I do not want surgery. I also do not want to increase my usage of pain medication—I already take pills to deal with the negative effects of five jaw surgeries and a prosthetic joint. I have my dad's walker and cane, but I am not emotionally prepared to rely upon them to navigate from one place to another.

My current plan is to live with my back aches and hope that they disappear as quickly as they came. If this fails, I visualize CT scans, consultations with specialists and a host of treatments.

I will need a strong backbone to deal with a deteriorating back.

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