

## *Orthopaedic Connection*

### **Back Surgery? Uh.....Maybe.**

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#### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Almost everyone has “back trouble” at some point during their life. It comes in all shapes and sizes so to speak.

Very lucky is the person over twenty five who has never had significant back trouble.

It can last a few days and be greatly annoying or be there aggravating you for the rest of your life once it starts.

The degree of back problems that humans have is perhaps the price we pay for walking upright. Meaning that the problems we have pertaining to our back are many times more than our animal friends who walk on four legs.

I'm not sitting here telling you the price is too high for gosh sakes! I think mankind has gotten a lot more done walking on two legs than four!

#### **THE BACK IS COMPLEX**

Compared with all the other things I deal with as an Orthopaedic Surgeon the back is impossibly complex.

Vertebrae: Cervical 7, Thoracic 12, lumbar 5, sacrum and coccyx. Throw in all the discs, ligaments, nerves, muscles, facet joints etc. The anatomy is complicated and the number of things that can go wrong with a back is a very long list.

The diagnosis of back pain needs to be as precise as possible making treatment much more effective.

#### **SURGERY ??**

Spine surgery has become very popular in recent years as more surgeons are taking special training in this subspecialty.

I'm afraid if you have a hammer (surgeon who does back surgery) everything looks like a nail (patient with back problem). If the doctor makes the potential outcome of surgery sound very good, many patients are saying yes to surgery in hopes it can help them.

It can, if done for very specific reasons like a ruptured disc or spinal stenosis. Occasionally bones in the spine may need to be fused together to try to relieve the back and possibly leg pain.

Just remember, as a surgeon who does back surgery, I'm telling you it can take weeks and sometimes months for back symptoms from different conditions to resolve with non surgery treatment.

In a very high percent of cases back pain can resolve with time, rest and then exercise, medication, physical therapy, and possibly epidural steroids.

There are very few back conditions that require surgery right away. Beware not being given the choice of conservative treatment rather than surgery.

I will have more to say about back surgery in the near future.

It is my opinion that at the present time there are too many back surgery procedures being performed with questionable benefit to the patient.

Back surgery certainly has its place, but you need to be aware that the outcome of the back surgery you may be considering is often very disappointing.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*

**Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive**

Wow! Your window to the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal world opens at [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It contains the Website Library of information, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of all previous articles.

You will be amazed at all the helpful information it contains.

All of the information pertains to everything I treat in the office and hospital.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush