

# LONDON SPINE CLINIC™



Newsletter

Spring 2018

## Who we are

The London Spine Clinic has been established as a multi-disciplinary centre of excellence for all spinal care, since 1997. Our aim is to bring together all the advantages of our different specialties, in order to provide holistic treatment for our patients. The emphasis of our practice is very much directed to providing the least invasive treatment for spinal

## Preventing back problems

### What can be done to prevent back pain and all the consequences?

Back pain is the second commonest cause of time off work in the UK (stress being the commonest) and accounts for over £3bn in costs to the economy. Preventing this epidemic would therefore seem sensible.

At the London Spine Clinic we have been working for many years in the field of preventative medicine, to try to deal with early back issues before they become a "problem". As most doctors know, keeping active and performing regular exercise is the key to success (not just with the back), but even fit individuals can run into problems. Managing these early, will usually reduce the secondary muscle spasm, which itself causes much more pressure on the damaged areas.

Many years ago, bed rest and even traction was advocated. Now appropriate support for the painful area can be as effective, but is free from the side effects of immobilisation (skin problems, infections, DVT, etc.).

Lumbar supports for low back pain or even sacro-iliac pain, thoracic supports for mid spinal pain and poor posture and neck supports when the upper spine hurts can, when used appropriately, minimise the duration and severity of the problem. By doing so, they allow the sufferer to return to activities, including work and this, in turn, not only saves the country and the companies money, but saves the individual having a long term problem, which otherwise may deteriorate and stop him/her working.

## POSTURE BRACE

AWARD WINNING DESIGN

01

BREATHABLE, ANTI-MICROBIAL AND HYPOALLERGENIC SHOULDER STRAPS FOR ULTIMATE USER COMFORT

02

LOW PROFILE, SEMI-RIGID BACK PLATE DESIGNED TO FLEX WITH AND SUPPORT THE SPINE

03

EASILY ADJUSTABLE, QUICK VELCRO FASTENING STRAPS IN LIGHT GREY FOR UNRIVALLED DISCRETION



*For upper back problems, often related to posture, this neck brace can correct the tendency for the head to "fall forwards" as the muscles fatigue*



## Lumbar spine support—when can it help?



We are often told that wearing a back brace is bad for you. “What you need is good muscle” to support the spine, not a belt. This, as a rule, is true. However, if the back is painful, there is inflammation in thee, not least because half of our body weight, when upright, is transmitted through the lower back.

If we have good “core” muscles around the abdomen—the multifidus, quadratus lumborum, transversus abdominis—and the pelvis, - gluteus medius, levator ani—then over 50% of this weight is taken through the “air-bag” that is the abdomen and transmitted into the pelvis.

When the tissues in and around the back are inflamed, the nerves to these muscles are affected. This is most often seen when looking at the multifidus muscles, the small paired muscles at the back of the spine. These waste away quickly, when the posterior primary rami (twigs of nerve coming back to them at each level in the spine) are “switched off” by inflammation.

Because of the inflammation, the switching off of the nerves and the subsequent weakness in the muscles, at the most important time, when the back is hurting, the postural support is hugely reduced. The body tries to compensate for this, by recruiting other muscles, the dynamic muscles. These ones are not designed for posture; rather they are built to do rapid strong contractions, to move the bones and joints. If called upon to do postural support, they fatigue quickly and tend to go into spasm, which makes the situation worse.

### So why does a back brace help?

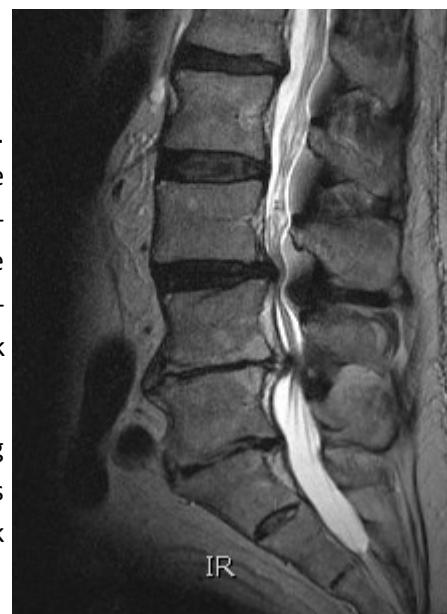
The back brace takes over the functions of the core muscles, in the short term. It increases the pressure in the abdomen and thereby allows the transmission of the weight of the upper body into the pelvis. In turn this leads to less pressure on the damaged areas and allows them to heal and the inflammation to die down.

The brace should be worn for short periods, 2-3 hours at a time maximum, with at least an hour between. Why? Because with more prolonged usage, the abdominal muscles will relax against the brace, to give support, when, of course, what the body wants, it for those core muscles to contract and restore its own support. So the brace is great for getting out of a crisis, but not for long term use.

### How can I find out the cause of the problem

The cause of low back pain is a constant subject for debate, even in surgical circles. However, identifying the commoner causes is simple. An MRI scan will show where there is damage, whether structures are inflamed and, of course, if there is compression of the nerves or spinal cord. It also shows the changes in the muscles around the spine. These unusually are the primary cause, but much more commonly are secondarily affected, wasting away because of failure of their nerve supply, or having to work overtime, often going into spasm, to protect a damaged area.

Here, the MRI shows the (white) fluid in the spine, which is squeezed by two bulging discs, the L3/4 and L4/5. You can see that the disc at the L4/5 level (second one up) is very narrowed, as is the lower one. This patient had problems with walking and back pain.



## **GDPR—what does it mean for us?**

The General Data Protection Registry has created a huge workload for the medical world. The need to register with the Information Commissioner's Office ([www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)), if not already registered, which, naturally, adds a fee onto our budgets. The encryption of emails and the need to have written positive acceptance from anyone we wish to contact takes time, effort and a lot of organisation. Having the absence of disapproval is not enough.

Whilst many medics have websites, historically it has been unusual to find a privacy policy associated with these. Now this is a mandatory feature. Failure to comply with GDPR regulations, potentially exposes the individual (or company) to fines of up to 4% annual turnover. That would hurt.

### **Emails to patients**

Officially, as of the following date, any email sent to a patient, even a copy of a clinic letter, needs to be encrypted. Many patients have difficulty un-encrypting these, resulting in unnecessary phone calls. They can be sent un-encrypted, but only if the patient specifically asks for this. A tick-box on your registration forms, subsequently signed, asking if they wish to receive un-encrypted emails, is adequate.

### **What do I need to do?**

All of this must be in place by the ***25th of May 2018***

Register with the ICO

Ensure that you have a privacy policy, which is up to date and visible on your website or in your office.

Have a system for sending emails in encrypted format, such that they can be “unzipped” by the receiving party; or, ask the patient if they wish to receive these un-encrypted.

If you send marketing information (which includes Newsletters like this) you must have written (tick-box) approval to send it to each person or group on your mailing list.

Check your responsibility regarding data storage; if you store financial data on patients, customers, companies, etc., they must be notified, the reasons and the nature of this information explored and the option for them to refuse this permission put to them.

Most private hospitals/organisations will want their doctors and secretaries to have completed an Information Governance (IG) course, which needs to be annually updated, These are available online at a small cost (see links below)

### **What if I fail to comply?**

According to the GDPR guidelines, which will become law, you will be liable for a fine of up to 4% of your annual turnover. These are for larger companies, are discretionary and are determined by the particulars of the breach of the regulations. It is unlikely that such a fine would be applied to an individual and being seen to be actively trying to comply is the best way to prevent any such issue.

### **Some useful resources**

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/resources>

<https://www.itgovernance.co.uk/blog/list-of-free-gdpr-resources>

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1625136/good-and-bad-examples-of-privacy-notice.pdf>

<https://www.mandatorytraining.co.uk>

<https://www.itgovernance.co.uk/dpa-and-gdpr-penalties>

# GDPR—Be prepared

# LONDONSPINECLINIC™

## How to find us:-

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*Note: the Option numbers have changed*

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