THE BAD BACK BOOK

STEVE LOCKHART

© 2006 S.J.Lockhart Pty Ltd.
The BAD BACK BOOK
Information and instructions for people who suffer from back pain.

Copyright (C) S.J.Lockhart Pty. Ltd. 2006.

all rights reserved

first edition 2000

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, printing, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher S.J.Lockhart Pty.Ltd. P.O.Box 262, Lane Cove 2066, Australia

For more information www.backpain.com.au

COVER SHOT by Graham Monro <graham@gmphotographics.com.au>
This photo was taken recently featuring one of the best 100 meter runners in the world in 2000. It a perfect picture for showing muscle imbalance, the underlying cause of most back pain.

COVER DESIGN by Charlie Rose

DIAGRAMS by Denise Lockhart

SPECIAL THANKS to Frank Lockhart,

DISCLAIMER:

All information contained in this book is the expressed opinion of the author unless otherwise stated. The theory and instructions covered relate to what he believes to be fact based on his experience working with pain and injury since 1988. Any advice from this book that you choose to follow is done so at your own risk and the author and his publishers take no responsibility whatsoever for any injury or damage that arises as a result of your following the advice in this book. If you are unsure of whether a particular exercise or advice given in this book is suitable for you, please contact the author or seek advice from your medical specialist before proceeding.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Feeling ' the Pain.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Back Pain originates.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Back Pain.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting facts.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muscles.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain associated with Muscle Imbalance.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Short leg.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and it's role in Back Pain.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions you may need answered.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises and their role in Back Pain.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid and Alkaline food chart.</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self treating your pain.</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

It was first suggested I visit John Guttenbeil when I complained to a friend about my sore back and knee. Six months earlier I had a left knee reconstruction as a result of rupturing my anterior cruciate ligament and after the operation had made a very slow recovery. The muscles in my leg were still wasted, my knee felt weak and my lower back had developed a chronic pain.

My friend had told me on a number of occasions (every time he heard me complaining) to go and see John but I admit I was rather hesitant having heard his somewhat vivid description of him,

"A big strong islander with powerful hands who would get stuck into my muscles."

At that time I felt very weak and sore so that was the last thing I thought I needed. Anyway I kept on complaining until my friend eventually said

"Listen mate. Either go and see John or don't ever tell me about your pain again,"

I thought that was fair enough so having made an appointment I went to see this guy for treatment and later realised it was the best and one of the most important decisions I had ever made.

John was a truly amazing guy who had been working with an ancient healing art, in its pure form, for 50 years out of his home. His wife took his bookings and managed the business side of things for him and John just worked away all day, most days, performing miracles on people who had been in pain for months, even years.... and he would so often easily take their pain away in only one or two 45 minute sessions. Even people who were told they needed surgery got better, with just John’s massage, in a very short time.

After seeing him a few times I became his biggest fan. I sent everyone to see him, from the elite athletes I knew to my father, brother and my sister for the nagging shoulder pain she had complained about for years. He never needed to advertise, his patients did that for him and he worked when and on who he wanted to, he was always in demand.

I not only admired his skill but pretty soon I was thinking what a great lifestyle he had, totally free of stress, a physical job that kept him strong and active and most important the satisfaction of being able to help people when nobody else had been able to. Not to mention his never having to worry about where his next dollar was coming from which was very different to my situation at the time. I then began to wonder who was going to carry on this work when John finally decided to retire.
There was no one else following in his footsteps and he was nearly 65 and already talking about retirement.

I thought the best thing to do was to somehow record the knowledge he had either by writing it down or getting it on film. I wasn't sure of the best way to go about it and I eventually decided I would need to learn and understand what he did and be able to do it myself, before I could hope to document it.

After he agreed to teach me I went to his clinic every week for 6 months, with a video camera, a dozen questions and anyone I could find who was in pain so I could watch him work.

And now here I am: twenty years have passed and I have written this book and put his entire method and philosophy down in a training course on DVD and text book.

I have also taken what John taught me, combined with what I learnt for myself working full time with the techniques since 1988 and developed a comprehensive self treatment program for sciatica and back pain sufferers which is already helping thousands of desperate people get rid of their chronic back pain.

John's teacher was a Japanese man who lived on the island of Tonga where John grew up. He befriended John when he was in his mid teens and one day took him aside and told him:

"From now on you are going to work with me and I'm going to teach you a skill that you can use for the rest of your life. You will make enough money to feed and clothe your family and be able to help people who are in pain." he continued, "This skill was taught to me by my father and it was taught to him by his father, in fact it has been in our family for many generations and it is knowledge and skill that very few people have. I am now going to pass it on to you"

John then worked side by side with this man for 5 years before he left Tonga for New Zealand and the start of his journey with the therapy that he carried on for 50 years before I met him.

To be honest, when I first started training with John and his techniques I had not intended to make it my career. My plan was to understand his method and to help him pass the knowledge on but the more I practiced the better I got and pretty soon it began to consume my life.

The realisation had come to me that I was born to do this work and carry on John's legacy. (I now call it SLM bodywork) Over time I developed my skills and knowledge and put together a course which I use to teach others who want to follow
us and learn these truly wonderful techniques and the philosophy behind them. I also wrote a second e-book explaining the work more fully called, How to Fix Pain Using Massage and Bodywork’.

After 20 years working with all types of bodies, including many elite athletes plus extremely chronic pain sufferers that the medical profession had given up on, I feel I have a unique understanding of pain and how it develops in the body. Equally important, I am very confident of being able to take it away and it is this knowledge that I pass on in the books and course I have written.

This Bad Back Book will explain a completely different approach to fixing your back pain and one that has worked for hundreds of years to produce results that conventional therapists don’t believe is possible. The aim of this book is to help people understand exactly is going wrong with their body, but more importantly to help them avoid being conned into paying out their hard earned money for treatments that are totally illogical and therefore doomed to fail. I also use it as a way to explain more detail about my self treatment program and how it can help you use proven techniques and exercises to rebalance and strengthen your body without irritating the problem you already have. As you read on you will see just how important that can be.
INTRODUCTION.

You know what it's like!

You innocently bend over to pick something up just like you've done a thousand times before without a problem and you feel a muscle grab in your back and instantly you know you're in trouble. Trying to straighten up is more than a little painful so you quickly seek out the nearest chair and sink into it, wondering if you are ever going to be able to get out of it again.

You start remembering all the things you had to do... and now can't.

"I won't be able to do the lawns tomorrow,....... that's not so bad,...... I'll have to sit and watch sport on television all day, ....great, oh but I won't be able to go to Johnny's soccer in the morning like I promised him, ........and gee I've got that big meeting interstate in two days".

Trying to move tells you that all is not good and you reach for the telephone to ring your doctor friend. " I've never had a back pain before doc, in fact we used to make fun of the guys at work who complained of back pain, told them they were soft, but this is incredible, every time I try to move it's agony."

"You've probably just pulled a muscle if moving is the only time you get pain. It's quite common," you're told. “You should just put ice on the painful area to settle the inflammation down and rest for a few days, then come and see me Monday if it still hurts and I'll have a look at it."

"A couple of days resting suits me fine doctor but can you assure me it will go away by then, I've got a golf game to play next week and the last thing I need is an extra handicap."

A couple of days later your pain is feeling marginally better, the inflammation is gone because you've hardly moved for two days. Getting to the doctors is no fun and for the whole trip your back continually aches. By the time you get there it is quite inflamed again and during examination the area looks red and feels hot.

"It seems to be just a muscular problem. Get these prescriptions filled and take them for three weeks. Rest up as much as possible and don't do anything that aggravates it so, no golf or other exercise that uses your back muscles. Walking is ok it if doesn't give you pain. If it's no better after the 3 weeks then come back and we can try something else."
As you leave with your diagnosis....."muscular strain", you can only hope his approach will do the trick. You've got your scripts for anti-inflammatory tablets to "relieve the pain" and analgesics, "to relax the muscles".

It's not that a doctor ever intends to waste your time and money or give you drugs that are not good for your general health. It's just that for years medical practitioners have believed, and told their patients, that 80 to 90% of lower back pain attacks will clear up on their own in 6 to 12 weeks regardless of the treatment they receive or even with no treatment. They believe that giving you some drugs to take for that period of time will help to keep you up and about and more comfortable while the problem rights itself.

Unbeknown to many MD's, this belief has been dispelled by a study that appeared in the British Medical Journal some years ago. The study concluded that this myth came about as a result of figures based on the MD's appointment book. The fact is, when the majority of patients go to an MD for lower back pain and the treatment does not effectively address the problem, the patient does not return for further treatment. Naturally, the doctors took this to mean their patient had recovered. They never considered their treatment had been ineffective and the patient was looking elsewhere for a solution and didn't want to be rude or complain.

"What the heck, the healthcare program paid the bill so it's easier to just move on without a confrontation. After all, the doctor has been helpful in the past and he has been looking after the family for years."

The problem is that too many people are thinking this way and the message isn't getting back to the MD's. The authors of the study also found that,

"Three months after the initial consultation with their general practitioner, only a minority of patients with low back pain had fully recovered. In fact there was little increase in the proportion who had reported recovery by 12 months, emphasising the recurrent and persistent nature of the problem. However most patients with lower back pain did not return to their doctor about their pain within 3 months of their initial consultation, and only 8% continued to consult for more than 3 months.

If the doctor had told you this at the time of your consultation you may well have asked for some anti depressants to go with your anti-inflammatory and analgesics. In fact you may still need them because, if you are one of the unlucky majority whose pain settles in and becomes either chronic or recurring, you will be undertaking a long and depressing search trying to find a solution for your problem. This, just to return to the life that you remember when you were doing all the things you wanted to, without worrying about how you would feel the next day.
If on the other hand your doctor was one of the few who is well informed and told you that back pain does not clear up on its own and the commonly prescribed treatments are not providing a solution, the question then becomes, "Where do I go to find a cure?"

The drugs are great if they make you feel fine in the short term, although they can affect the quality of your work and your health. But after taking them for 3 weeks the pain is still there and the doctor is saying it's time to try something else like physiotherapy, chiropractic, acupuncture or massage, the choice will vary depending on the doctor.

You probably found that the physiotherapist prescribed exercises and stretching which aggravated your problem and a chiropractic adjustment only lasted for a short time if it didn’t irritate it. Acupuncture doesn't seem to do much at all and although the massage feels good when they stop, it's painful while it's being done. But none of them provided long term relief and in no time your pain returned. You are still unable to do any exercise, sit down or stand up for long periods without discomfort. I would also bet that you have begun to feel really tired lately as well...and all you did was bend down to pick something up, what was all that about ?........." What are those anti-depressants called again?"

While you are going around seeing people about your pain you start to realise that every therapist is very confident they can fix your problem, they know exactly what's wrong and "will have you up and about in no time."

But, unless you are one of the lucky few, you will find that they are all making promises they are unable to keep and after many visits and spending a lot of money with each one, you begin to worry about your long term prognosis. "Is it just me? Am I the only one who doesn't get better?"

Well I can assure you you're not a unique case and although the answers are out there..... somewhere..... if you are like the majority of sufferers you have a long and difficult search ahead, with still no guarantees of success.

If after six weeks none of the treatments have worked you may find yourself being sent off to have an X-ray or even the more sophisticated and expensive MRI scan, to see if any ligaments or structural damage can be seen. For those that are still in pain...... and still searching months later that dreaded S word may start to come up.....Surgery.

A friend once told me about a man who is presented as a specialist in back pain, Dr. Alon. P. Winnie, a professor of Anesthesiology in the US. He has been involved in the study and treatment of back pain for over thirty years. Searching the internet I
found a copy of an interview he once did where he made observations that many other medical practitioners don't seem to be aware of, he said,

"Since about 85% of back pain is muscular then clearly back pain due to muscular causes can be prevented by maintaining the balance between muscle groups that work against each other, to keep the body erect, and to function normally."

"The muscular causes include muscle strain, muscle sprain and most frequently, muscular imbalance where one group of muscles is more developed than another group of muscles. This causes the whole architecture of the back to be askew."

Sure you know your problem is a muscle strain, but maybe you have an imbalance and that is what caused the strain to happen and is also the reason why it won't heal.

When asked what he thought was the most common cause of chronic back pain Dr Winnie said,

"Most frequently it is muscular. That's why however, it is so dangerous if somebody gets the wrong diagnosis. When somebody has back pain due to muscular problems and suddenly somebody's trying to operate on their spine, clearly that is not going to restore normalcy or take away their pain. You have to know the correct cause in order to treat it properly. But as I said, statistically, 85-90% of chronic back pain is due to muscular imbalance."

Over the years I have had dozens of people come to my clinic with back pain who have had a lumbar fusion because they were told it would fix their pain, but it didn't because their real problem was a build up of pressure at L4/ L5 or L5/ S1 (the joints at the base of the spine where the lumbar vertebrae meets the sacrum) due to muscle imbalances.

Dr Winnie's findings and documented interview at least shows that the right information on the cause of most back pain is available, but a general diagnosis of 'muscle imbalance' is still a long way from being rid of the pain. Unfortunately for most people that is where the problem starts.

It was only recently I read somewhere that, although there are millions of back pain sufferers in the world half of them never find out the cause of their back pain. Imagine that, in this day and age you can't get an answer to something as simple as that.

It is my intention with this book and my self treatment program, which I will tell you more about later, to provide answers that should satisfy most back pain sufferers. Including not only those who have been diagnosed with 'muscular problems' but also
those who have been diagnosed with structural damage or another cause, who want to better understand their problem before deciding on the type of treatment they'll commit to. I hope to be able to give you the information you need to be able to competently manage the treatment and rehabilitation of your back problem yourself which will ultimately give you the best result.

As part of that, I will endeavor to explain how the ever increasing stress and activity levels of your lifestyle, or a specific accident or injury, can be the start of a problem that over time slowly develops into a muscle imbalance and ends up as chronic back pain. And it all happens without you ever being aware of it......... until you feel the pain.

My training and experience has taught me to see and feel the way a body twists and tilts as it lies on a massage table or stands in front of me, basically which muscles are pulling it which way. Reading the body this way becomes easier the more you do it. But it took me a long time to fully understand what my teacher John had been trying to pass on to me all those years earlier as he was giving people fast, lasting relief for their long term chronic pain.

It is not until you can do this that you can work out which muscles are causing the problem as it rarely relates to where a person feels their pain. Unfortunately as most conventional back pain therapists, including doctors and specialists, never put their hands on the body to feel what is going on, they are only guessing about what might be the cause of the pain, and generally for a very hefty fee thank you very much.

The combination of seeing and treating thousands of bodies that are in pain, showed me that there are very consistent patterns that show up in bodies that have similar pain symptoms.

Very often it is the same area that has tight or shortened muscles when a certain pain is felt. In fact, there are not that many different areas of the back where a person is likely to feel pain, you would see that in the pain/ treatment guides I include in my self treatment program book.

As an example, most people suffer from back pain in the lower back on one side or the other that can eventually spread right across the lower back or works its way down into the hip or down the leg. You may be surprised to know that there is a simple self treatment technique that you can be taught to do, to take this pain away very quickly.

If this information rings a bell and makes sense to you read on and I will explain how you have ended up with your back pain in and what you can now do about it.
FEELING THE PAIN

First, let us consider some of the facts.

Most pain is felt in the joints or the point where a muscle attaches to the bone. With the back for example, although the upper back is by no means excluded, it is the lower joints that seem to be much more susceptible to pain because this is the centre of our core.

The joints are the one place where an imbalance can manifest because they can be put out of alignment with a tilt or twist. What happens to the nerve, ligament, a muscle or disc as a result of that joint moving is the pain you normally feel.

What I have discovered in practice is that there are usually only one or two main groups of muscles, setting up the imbalances that cause the joint to move or the pressure to build up in a muscle making the joint stiff or tight and painful to use.

If the muscles that set up the imbalances (usually the deeper structural muscles) are worked on correctly, the pressure that causes the twist, tilt or tightness is released, along with the pain.

Unfortunately, and contrary to what you have been told, this doesn’t happen with stretching or exercise as dysfunctional muscles don’t respond the way you would like them to.

Using a 'hands on' form of bodywork is the most effective way of identifying and correcting these problem muscles but finding someone who can do that job quickly and effectively, at a reasonable cost is probably the most difficult part. The cheaper alternative is using specific self treatment techniques to target the right muscles, with a rubber or tennis ball, enough times that the changes start to hold.

When a back develops problems it is not normally something that has just happened but rather the result of a build up of imbalances over time. It tends to involve the whole body in some way and therefore requires a holistic approach to get a lasting cure.

To demonstrate, reach to the right to pick something up and you’ll notice it is not just your shoulder and arm that moves, you will feel every muscle in your body adjust in some way to support that movement.

These days there are not enough properly trained, hands on therapists who can recognise the problem muscles and know how to restore their length and function to put the body back into balance. Too many modalities rely on machines or stretching
and exercise to fix back pain and these methods are flawed in many ways as you’ll discover, if you haven’t already.

Let’s face it; if they worked I wouldn’t need to be writing this book as people would get over their back problems as quickly as they came.

Without using the hands on approach to scan the body’s muscle system and the fact that most causes of back pain don’t show up on x rays or CT/ MRI scans, most of the time therapists are guessing as to what the problem is and are unable to monitor the progress of their work.

Even more importantly they can’t recognise when the problem does not involve the muscles and may require totally different approach.

I know I could never have learnt what I have without putting my hands on so many bodies.

Due to the repetitive nature of bodywork and the fact that the basic anatomy of the body never changes, you are constantly learning how every different type of body feels, whether it be strong, healthy, weak, stressed, young or old. Believe it or not you can even get a clue to what a person eats and their personality from the feel of their tissue.

Any therapist who doesn’t get their hands onto the muscles and body regularly, which lets face it is most of them including a doctor, physiotherapist, chiropractor, acupuncturist, Pilates or yoga instructor, personal trainer etc, is severely handicapped right from the start when it comes to successfully treating back pain. There is no way, without the vital information you get from the feel of the body, they could devise the best way of approaching a particular person’s back problem, or diagnose it correctly for that matter.

Working with my hands on the body has taught me things I have never seen in the text books, just as it has taught me that some things I have seen in books are not correct. As most text books are written by academics with science backgrounds, that doesn’t surprise me but it is also bad news for the poor back pain sufferer who is looking for a cure, or the therapist who’s looking to learn the right way to deliver that cure.

Part of my training included learning the points in the body that stimulate and revitalise muscles so that they start to function properly again. Plus the way to work and release built up tension or stress by helping the muscles to completely let go, in contrast to relaxing them which is only a temporary change.
When you just rub or stretch a muscle you can get it to relax for a short time, but by activating it or releasing it by using little known techniques via a pressure point or nerve line can achieve a much longer lasting release.

In one hour you can significantly change how a person feels within themselves simply by making a significant change to the muscle imbalances in their body and how those muscles feel to the touch.

The body will respond to the right touch as if it knows what is good for it, just as it will freeze up and resist the wrong treatment as a way of protecting itself. Have you ever gone for an adjustment from a chiropractor and had trouble relaxing?

When seeking out treatment for your back pain you need to tune into your body and instinctively you will know what is helping you and what isn’t.

A very good rule to follow is; make sure it’s a full body treatment focusing on the muscles and the body’s overall balance. If you don’t get a noticeable result within three treatments or a logical explanation as to why, you probably won’t ever with that therapist. (note: don’t write off a therapy because of one particular therapist that practices it.)

One of the main reasons I developed my self treatment program, was because I realised there are so many people who don’t have access to a really good therapist yet they have a very chronic problem to treat.

I realised early on that back pain and sciatica sufferers needed a way of taking control of their pain themselves by diagnosing and treating their own problem using techniques that had been tested over many years and proven to work. Also, I knew that many people couldn’t afford to spend several hundred dollars on the medical merry go round hoping they would find someone who could help them.

I felt that if people were well educated on diagnosing their own problem and had effective techniques they could use daily at home to make progress on their own, they would get much better value from the therapy appointments they had and more importantly, they’d be able to recognise very quickly when a therapist they saw was going to be a waste of their money and time.
HOW BACK PAIN ORIGINATES.

In my experience, most chronic back pain first occurs as either an acute episode or quite mysteriously. You wake up one day in pain or move a certain way and feel something give and end up with a pain that won't go away. The reality is you could have done something the day before, a week, or even a month ago that overworked or injured muscles in your body in some way and started an imbalance or deterioration that weeks later led to the chronic problem you now have.

As a result of overuse, a trauma or strain, even bad posture, tension will build up in a muscle to the point where the circulation is impaired and eventually that muscle will weaken and in certain situations, fail causing the body to compensate and eventually get out of balance.

Like someone who is constantly hunched over when they sit at their desk or leans on one leg when they stand.

A muscle imbalance invariably leads to the pelvis moving into the wrong position causing it to either tilt forward or back, up or down, or rotate. These 5 positions will have a flow on effect to the spine which will upset the position or spacing of the vertebrae and put pressure on the discs or nerves leading to back pain or even worse, sciatica.

As tightness builds up in a muscle due to poor circulation, that muscle becomes weak causing other muscles to have to compensate or carry the weight for it. These other muscles then start to overwork, fatigue and tighten up and the odds become higher that one of the joints in the spine will be put under an uneven pressure which will end up causing pain and inflammation.

As the muscular system gets out of balance you slowly lose flexibility. When you notice your flexibility is going it is the first warning sign that an imbalance is building.

Imbalances and compensations continue to build until there is no potential left and something has to give and it’s often at the weakest point, the joint. This is where many treatments are incorrectly focussed, leading to expensive and unnecessary X Rays, MRI’s or CT Scans which invariably show very little. Even when they do identify a structural problem with the joint, odds on it’s not the cause of the pain anyway so treating it has little or no lasting effect.

The muscle imbalances that set all this up will usually be the underlying problem yet they are rarely considered or treated by most Doctors and therapists.
These imbalances can be confined to one area such as the back or shoulders, or spread throughout the whole body causing a pattern of tight muscles and pressure that eventually leads to weakness and pain. I have treated many people who have been doing regular exercise for years yet their muscles are weak and painful.

Some treatments you get for pain will exercise and stretch you until your body compensates sufficiently that your pain goes away but it doesn’t remove the imbalances, it just covers them up. You lose flexibility and have a negative effect on the circulation and strength in the body.

The more your body has already compensated for previous injuries or damage, the less effective these stretching and exercise type treatments will be. Usually the older a person gets the less they respond to these treatments, consequently people end up having to curtail their activities as a way of relieving their pain.

When we move, especially doing vigorous exercise, we exert a force which should be carried evenly throughout our whole body. But as a result of even a minor imbalance it is distributed unevenly throughout our muscle system causing compensations and the imbalance to spread deeper into the body. Especially when the body is unhealthy or weak and holds onto its tension.

This build up of compensations and imbalances leads to a greater potential for injury if we over exert or over extend ourselves in our lifestyle. This also explains why sportsppeople, even elite ones, end up being much more injury prone later in their careers. Unbeknown to most of them, it is less to do with their age and more to do with bad body management during their younger years.

Even though at any one time most people have imbalances and therefore the potential to injure themselves it will generally only become a problem and end up a pain episode for people who push themselves beyond their body’s limits through such things as an accident, or overuse in their work, sport or lifestyle.

Bending over at that particular angle to pick something up off the floor can be just a bit too much stretch for a muscle in the back that was already too tight and too weak to support the weight or pressure you were putting on it.

This movement caused the muscle to go into spasm, (a permanent state of contraction) and become irritated at the point where it attaches to the bone, or it upsets the alignment of a vertebrae causing pressure on a disc.

A good example of this is when a person strains muscles across their lower back by lifting something fairly heavy into or out of their car. The erector spinae muscles (the supporting muscles that run either side of the spine) are often tight already and
therefore weak and so the action of trying to support a weight out in front of the body is too much strain on them and they go into spasm.

When receiving treatment, attention normally focuses on the area where the pain is felt. The problem muscles that are causing the pain are left in the locked up condition resulting in a person feeling their back pain every time they sit or bend forward. Sitting and bending requires the erector spinae muscles to relax and lengthen but they are in spasm so they can't.

In time the locked up muscles become weaker through a lack of circulation and the pain becomes more common or chronic.

Tension in certain muscles from imbalances and compensations will continue to build up and spread over time until they are removed. The older you get or the more pressure you put on your body, the more you will build up this stress and tension, slow down your circulation and become weak, making it easier to injure yourself.

This accumulation of tightness in the muscle, accompanied by a lack of good circulation, means less of the muscle is functioning properly for strength and support. This is one of the reasons an elderly person can be frail and unsteady on their feet. If they were to receive good bodywork to reactivate the muscles, and the right exercise to help them regain strength and mobility they would feel ten years younger.

Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that we all get imbalances in our body and there is really no way to avoid them completely but their effects can be reversed by a therapist who is skilled enough to know how to do that.

Further, although the imbalances need to be addressed they are not the only issue, the level of physical, emotional and chemical stress in our body is equally important and also needs to be addressed because unless the stress is removed, the imbalances will resist efforts to correct them.

You can be shown how to manage this a lot better than you probably are at present so the imbalances will have a lot less impact on you and you will be largely protected against getting issues like back pain.

As part of my self treatment program I cover the things that cause your stress levels to rise and ways you can keep them down so you will be less susceptible to feeling the potential pain spots that exist in your body.

You bend over and feel something give. In actual fact, when a muscle gives out under a certain load or movement it is often just showing up a weakness that has been allowed to develop rather than being solely the result of that isolated incident.
It is my belief that the main reason people suffer from 'chronic' or recurring back pain is more because they are at the wrong clinic receiving ineffective treatment rather than their pain being especially difficult to fix. And that also goes for the person who suffers from degeneration, disc bulging, herniation or a pinched nerve.

I believe that generally there is nowhere near enough emphasis being placed on treating muscle imbalances and dysfunction when it comes to curing back pain and that’s the reason we have an epidemic on our hands.

I am sure you will agree it is the muscles in our body that determine our posture and alignment and as they are the active component in all of our movements. So why would cracking a few vertebrae or stretching or strengthening one part of the body have any chance at providing an effective result to take away pain. It wouldn’t and it doesn’t!

The brain orchestrates, the nerve's fire and the muscles perform. The skeletal structure simply supports that performance and therefore any treatment to correct a back problem, regardless of how much the spine, discs and nerves are involved, should start with correcting the imbalances and functional problems in the muscles.

The current medical model does not recognise this and so the sufferer does not get the fast, long lasting fix for their pain that they should, in fact they are often told this is not possible, which in most cases is irresponsible and inaccurate.

Allow me to give you what I think is a typical example of the inadequacy of treatment that has occurred here in Australia. I treated a patient, a 13 year old girl, who when six years old fell down some stairs and hurt her back. After the fall a doctor checked her out and determined she had no breaks or structural damage, only muscle pain, which eventually went away so “she was fine”. As a result her parents were led to believe that she needed no further treatment. Now at 13 yrs, after the injured muscles were left untreated in her body for seven growing years, there are major imbalances. The muscles in her shoulder and hip on the right side were so bound up they were pulling the whole architecture of her body out of alignment. When she came to me her right leg looked 4cm or nearly 2 inches shorter than her left, not because the bone was shorter but because the muscles, traumatised by her fall, were still contracted and had tilted her pelvis by that much.

Can you imagine that? If you were to put a shoe on your left foot only and try and walk or run around you will get an idea of how she felt all the time.

In the early stages of treatment when I temporarily put a heel lift in her shoe she was amazed at how much better she felt, instantly.
As a result of her not being treated properly after her fall, she developed a scoliosis or curve in her spine. Although she wasn't in any great pain when she saw me, she had started getting very tight in her lower back and neck. She was also suffering from constant tiredness and muscle fatigue even after a small amount of exercise. She could have been a potential world champion athlete but would never get the chance to find out.

Now another four years on as I am doing this rewrite she has her first child. I wonder if that would have happened had she still been left twisted up and in pain. I know of plenty of women who mysteriously cannot or are not game to fall pregnant after suffering from chronic back problems for years.

My experience has shown that if an injury of this kind is left untreated, depending on emotional levels, diet and lifestyle in the years ahead, the person would be likely to develop any number of symptoms; including chronic tiredness, chronic back pain, headaches, digestive or stomach problems, even problems with other joints in the body such as in the hips, knees, shoulders or neck.

In time, she could well join a long list of people who are tired and depressed most of the time, find it hard to cope with a full time job and are sick of being a financial burden to their family and the rest of the nation. Instead of feeling great and enjoying life these people spend too much of their time visiting doctors and other therapists searching for a solution to their problems and putting up with people thinking they are hypochondriacs or malingerers.

Twenty years on these problems become very difficult to get rid of and all of it unnecessary, because if they had been treated correctly when the injury first occurred it would have been a quick and simple problem to sort out with no further ongoing complications. The sad thing is that this scenario is and has been repeated all over the world every day as people have car accidents or falls as children and the problems they get are left to grow with them for many years.

Unfortunately muscles do not recover on their own from a traumatic event like a fall, significant strain or blow, the tension needs to be eased out and the imbalances removed before they will recover properly. In a young person a lack of pain is no indication that there is no problem, it can show up as a head that tilts to one side or a child who is a bit unsteady on their feet or clumsy.

If they don't get this vital treatment early on, then the lack of circulation of oxygen and nutrients to certain muscles will eventually cause imbalances making a person inflexible and weak and unable to cope with even a moderate amount of exercise later in life. Not to mention a myriad of other symptoms that can follow on as a result as I mentioned above. I have seen numerous cases of parents who have brought their
older teenage child in with energy problems or pain caused by an accident many years earlier that were never given the proper attention.

Most people would be surprised to know that muscles have a memory and they store the trauma of a painful physical injury, much like the mind does with a significant emotional trauma. Just like the mind the muscles require rehabilitation from these traumas.

It is a fact of life that it’s much more common for someone to talk out their problems or feelings with a friend to help clear their mind than for them to have a deep tissue balancing massage after any physical injury to help fix their body.

According to the 'experts', this deterioration of our muscles over time is largely the result of aging when in fact it is more the result of our lifestyle and a lack of maintenance over a long period of time.

Even exercise doesn’t save you from this deterioration because if only half of a muscle is functioning properly the exercise will make that half stronger. But won’t do much to change the other half and as a whole, the muscle will still end up dysfunctional pretty quickly especially when you have a break from the exercise as people invariably do.

When you get a deep tissue massage and it feels painful that is the weakness being worked on but this is the best way to stop a worse problem arising later on.

It is much easier to prevent a problem now than fix the one that develops many years on.

It has always amazed me that most people will spend large amounts of time and money to maintain their home or their car but will thoughtlessly neglect their body, even though their body will have to last them much longer than their home or car ever will.

When a car looks dirty or the paint flakes on the house you can see it and know something needs to be done. On the body it is not so obvious. The problems start on the inside and by the time they begin to show up on the outside we have to deal with things like conditioning, habits and cravings or addictions, at which point changing becomes very difficult.

It is funny how when it does start to show up on the outside people rush off for cosmetic surgery etc at great expense when they could have avoided those bulges and wrinkles more effectively with proper internal maintenance during their life.
I saw a great sign once that said 'If you don't look after your body where are you going to live.' It is so true isn't it?

I suppose you could make up another one, 'If you don't look after your muscles how are you to move around without pain.'

Although Dr Winnie has told us that most back pain is the result of muscle imbalances, it is my experience that it is not the imbalances themselves that actually give a person back pain. Rather the muscle imbalance puts the body into a vulnerable state whereby an increase in stress or pressure on a certain area will cause a strain and leave a person in pain.

This is evidenced by the accepted fact that most people have muscle imbalances but only about 20% of them have back pain at any one time. It is also the reason why an activity that someone has done a hundred times before without a problem, can all of a sudden set off a pain episode.

I’ve explained how the cause of a person's pain can normally be traced back to a dysfunctional muscle, or group of muscles, that have tightened or shortened.

Muscles tighten then time plus restricted circulation creates weakness and they shorten which causes irritation and pain.

An example of this is people who get whiplash after a fairly minor car accident. Often they feel fine a few days after the accident but months later develop chronic problems such as neck or back pain or headaches. At this time they often don't respond to the treatment they get because it doesn't deal with the muscles that were traumatised at the time of the accident, rather focusing on the symptoms they now have.

If the correct treatment is given to the traumatised muscles straight after the accident happens then the muscle condition and function is preserved and a problem never develops. The subsequent years of that person’s life are totally different, instead of what normally happens, where they end up with chronic pain and spend a fortune trying to get it fixed.

If you ever have an accident in future, don’t leave it untreated, even when the pain settles quickly. Rather seek out a therapist who has two important skills

1. An ability to feel and detect the muscles in the body that have problems, and

2. Techniques that will change those muscles back to a condition consistent with the rest of the body.
I had a lady come to see me the other day with carpal tunnel and was told by her doctor she would need surgery. When I treated her she had a fairly supple and balanced body all over except she was noticeably tight in the upper back, especially the neck and arms, probably the result of her job and some current stress she was dealing with. When I took all the tension from these areas she immediately felt the numbness leave her finger tips and the blood flow return down her arms. Too many people just believe what they are told and go for the surgery leaving the tension and problem there and then having a worse situation to deal with years later.

With most people, it is highly likely a fairly large number of problem muscles could be found when working on the whole body, but only some of them will be related to the pain the patient feels at any one time. It therefore follows that the therapist needs to be able to figure out which muscles relate to which pain and that is a skill in itself.

As far as back pain is concerned, if a therapist can isolate the muscle or group of muscles that are contributing directly to someone's back pain and they have the skill to work on them the right way, then the pain should disappear very quickly. If it doesn’t stay away, it is just an indication that the muscle condition is less than perfect and more work is needed to get them to that point or the structural issues are holding things back.

In my experience, the results that are being achieved in treating chronic back pain demonstrate quite clearly that treatments involving just massage, ultrasound, stretching, movement exercises or prescription drugs, will not do the job satisfactorily. I am sure most people who have tried these treatments for their back pain would readily agree me on this.

On the other hand I have found that full body treatments that use:

- Trigger pointing and stimulation techniques to turn on dysfunctional muscles,
- Massage to locate the imbalances and improve circulation,
- Acupressure and nerve lines to stimulate weak flaccid muscles,
- Instruction on correct posture,
- The right isometric exercises,
- Diet changes and added nutrition

Will by far produce the best, lasting results.

If only the painful area is treated, to the point where the pain has gone away, the patient will be as they were before the onset of pain with the same imbalances and compensations in place and very susceptible to being laid low with another acute pain episode.
When the muscles have deteriorated significantly because of carrying the problem for a lot of years, the therapist needs to prop the person up long enough for the muscle condition to improve and there is no reason why a person would have pain whilst that is being done.

One interesting observation I have made while treating people whose pain goes back many years has been that as a person is having the layers of these compensations removed they can sometimes experience, just for a day or two, the same pain which they suffered some years previously but hadn't felt since.

I remember treating one patient with a chronic shoulder problem who, after a few weeks, got very concerned when a sciatica pain she had suffered many years earlier started to resurface. When I told her not to worry, that it would not be around for long, she told me she had been laid up with it for 7 months many years ago. The new episode only lasted intermittently for a few days between treatments and after I made further progress with her body and removed more of the compensations, she was fine.

I remember another time treating an elite athlete for a chronic knee pain. The soreness came on half way through his running sessions and quickly built up until he had to stop training until it settled. I examined him to see what was going on and found that many of the important structural muscles on his right side, the same side as his knee pain, were tighter and more contracted than those on his left side. When he exerted his body in running his pelvis was being pulled down on the right side causing his knee joint to be slightly out of alignment. This was placing abnormal stress on the lateral or outside of his right knee and after a short time it would start to become inflamed and painful.

For the average person, eliminating all of the compensations and imbalances in their body is not really necessary to remove their back pain but the more active a person is, the more necessary it becomes. Also, the longer a person has been suffering from chronic pain the more the body's compensations will be directly involved with it and they will need to be dealt with before the chronic back pain can be eliminated.

If you are looking at this theory for the first time you may be thinking that, although it sounds interesting, it is very different from what you have been told previously. You are therefore understandably confused. That is entirely reasonable for I know this book will cause plenty of debate and many of my explanations will be dismissed by those who have a different point of view. However, this way of looking at the body forms the philosophy behind SLM Bodywork and is the reason it works so well.

Although I acknowledge there can be more than one way of achieving the same result I have always found that this logic, along with the unique SLM bodywork techniques,
is the fastest and most effective way of dealing with a wide range of conditions, especially chronic back pain.

The reason other methods fail in my opinion is because they are unable to significantly reduce the general stress levels in the body, giving it more flexibility to cope with any imbalances left behind in the muscles system. They stretch and strengthen the body to force compensations into place which protects the injured area for only a short time, but this generally only works for younger people who don’t already have an accumulation of problems in their body and haven’t already been compensating for years.

I really hope that my book challenges your existing beliefs sufficiently; causing you to think long and hard about the way you will choose to have your back pain treated or if you are a therapist, the way you work on your patients who are in pain. Ultimately the treatments you select are your choice, but be careful because there are lots of ways you can spend your money and not get a result.
TYPES OF BACK PAIN.

There are many types of back pain and I will go through them now to help clear up any confusion you might have. Establishing the cause of your pain is an important first step in finding the solution, as an incorrect diagnosis can send you in the wrong direction wasting a lot of your time and money.

Sprains and strains are seen to be the most common source of back pain, accounting for around 85% of cases. But that is a very generalised description and rather than being the cause of the back pain, these strains or sprains are the back pain you feel and the symptom of a deeper problem that exists.

Imbalances in the muscles, caused by such things as bad posture, an injury or accident, overuse, stress or simply lifestyle factors that raise your stress levels, are what cause the sprains and strains to happen in the first place.

For the relatively inactive person acute back sprain or strain can often be settled down quite simply with rest and heat on the tight muscles (not the point you feel the pain) and perhaps a short course of anti-inflammatory drugs. However for the active person it becomes a great deal more complicated because, without having the muscles rebalanced and the 'cause' of the strain eliminated, it can often be some time or in some cases never, before a sufferer can return to their active lifestyle without pain.

In my opinion, the major underlying cause of sprain and strain injuries occurring in relatively inactive people is poor posture or a physically stressful activity they are not use to. This can include such things as a day of gardening, house painting or moving furniture. Combine the over activity with an inadequate diet and you have a recipe for pain.

As part of sprains and strains I would have to include the chronic pain that comes after a fall or accident. Often the injured area does not get the correct treatment and after a while, because of the trauma that is left in certain muscles, they become weak causing pressure to build up on a nerve or joint causing inflammation and pain.

When it is the back that’s affected, this weakness can eventually set up more long term damage to the disks or vertebrae and any one of the following conditions could be the result.

Disc problems, although seen as a localised structural problem, these are often a product of muscle imbalances whereby the twisting or tilting pressure generated by the pelvis and exerted on the vertebrae, exposes the disk to damage or injury. This includes a bulging disc at L4/ L5 or L5/ S1 (the last two joints of the lumbar
vertebrae) that presses on the sciatic nerve causing a pain that goes into the buttock or down the leg called sciatica. A more serious problem is a ruptured disc where the outside casing of the disc called the annulus breaks and the leaking fluid from inside irritates the nerve.

Often the reason why a disc is injured in the first place is because of a muscle imbalance. This exposes the disc to pressure it isn't designed to take. By successfully treating the muscle imbalances I have found that this pressure can be released giving the bulging or ruptured disc a chance to recover, eliminating the pain and the need for surgery. Of course the ruptured disc takes a lot longer to come right and requires patience and persistence on the part of the sufferer.

I can think of one particular case I worked on recently where a ruptured disc in a 26 year old was treated successfully and he was taken out of pain even though the MRI scan still showed the fluid spreading around the vertebrae and nerves. A specialist looking at the scan would not believe the person had no pain at that point, but the reality was, once the pressure had been taken away from the spine and the imbalance in his pelvis removed he felt fine.

When performing surgery on an injured disc, as is regularly done, the specialist often chooses to perform a discectomy with a laser or what they call a 'classic discectomy', which is the more commonly used method. It is carried out under a general anaesthetic and is quite invasive.

Firstly the skin on the back is cut; the muscles of the spine are separated from the vertebra and retracted laterally to allow access for the surgical instruments. A hole is then cut through the vertebrae to provide a way of getting to the nerve and disk and through this opening the nerve root is identified and retracted aside, the annulus is cut and the nucleus is removed in fragments with forceps.

After surgery the normal procedure is for the patient to be put on analgesic medication and taken out of bed to start walking the day after surgery. Discharge from hospital is usually after a couple of days and the patient can often return to work, depending on the job, usually is in 4 to 8 weeks, unless there are any complications, like an infection or the operation doesn't succeed at getting rid of the pain.

With the laser discectomy the procedure is done under local anesthesia, with a slight sedation. A needle is passed through the skin from the back, slightly laterally, into the herniated disk as its position is constantly monitored with X-rays.

Once the needle is in position, a fibre optics endoscope is passed through it to the centre of the disc. This device allows the surgeon to see the nucleus while, with
another fibre, they use the laser beam to evaporate the disc material. Once the surgeon is happy with the amount of space he has produced in the centre of the disc, the endoscope and needle are removed.

After surgery the patient is taken directly to their room and under normal circumstances is discharged the same day, walking. Returning to work will normally be between 2 to 6 weeks depending on the occupation.

Although the laser discectomy surgery seems like a much simpler way to go it is not suitable for all patients. For example, if the disk has already ruptured the annulus, the external ring and outer ligaments, or there is a detached fragment of disk, then the classic discectomy will have to be undertaken.

One question that comes up when a discectomy is being discussed is should it be accompanied by a spinal fusion? Research that was carried out in 1994 with this question in mind found the following:

'Chhabra MS. Hussein AA. Eisenstein SM. Clinical Orthopaedics & Related Research. (301):177-80, 1994 Apr. *The results of lumbar discectomy for a sciatic syndrome in 90 patients were reviewed at an average of 8.5 years after operation. The best results were achieved in those patients who had their discectomy within 12 months of the onset of their symptoms and through minimal approaches. Eighty-six percent of patients returned to gainful employment. Sixteen patients (18%) returned with low back pain attributable to the loss of intervertebral disk, of whom eight (9%) required secondary spinal fusion for control of pain. Seven of these latter patients obtained gratifying clinical and functional results. The findings suggest there is insufficient indication for routine spinal arthrodesis combined with lumbar disk excision. Those eight patients (9%) who developed a disabling postdiscectomy/ postlaminectomy instability syndrome did so usually as a consequence of excessive bone and ligament excision and benefited significantly from subsequent spinal arthrodesis. '

As the research indicates there are, unfortunately, no guarantees with this operation but it is what you will normally be advised to do by a specialist when you haven't responded to the rest, anti inflammatory tablets and the physiotherapy previously prescribed for you. Of course there are much simpler, less invasive ways of dealing with this problem.

A herniated disc is a problem where a part of the disc swells on one side and impacts on a nerve. It usually occurs in people under 40 years old. By the time a person is much older, the deterioration and atrophy of the structural muscles in their back makes them so much less flexible that, problems coming from the twisting or tilting of the vertebrae that causes pressure on the disc's or nerve's are very rare.
Sciatica is an increasingly common back condition that results in pain running down the leg normally from pressure on the exiting sciatic nerve at L4/ L5 vertebrae in the lower back. However I have also had success treating the condition by freeing up the nerve further down the leg where it is trapped by a muscle in spasm.

Although conventional treatments for sciatica often don't provide very fast or satisfactory results and it is seen as one of the more difficult conditions to treat, it can be successfully treated fairly quickly providing the right approach is taken. One thing for sure is that it should require concern and attention from the sufferer. They must rest when required and follow a treatment program right through to the end as there is a big risk of making a sciatica problem a lot worse and chronic if a person persists in aggravating it. If you suffer from sciatica you will benefit from understanding your condition and the options more fully as is covered in my self treatment program.

Some sciatica sufferers have the pain for many months and end up with secondary problems because of all the medication they take. It should be a priority for you to find a therapist who can treat your sciatica quickly and successfully and do what ever is necessary to get over it completely before you attempt to resume your active lifestyle.

Another back condition known as Spinal Stenosis occurs when the disc dries out and degenerates causing the space where the nerve exits from the spine to become narrow and much more susceptible to being irritated. This occurs more commonly in older people.

If the muscles in the back have not deteriorated too much and can be kept in a supple and healthy condition, the pain and discomfort experienced from this condition can be minimized or possibly taken away completely. Where this is not possible, a combination of gentle exercise, good diet, and bodywork that stimulates the core muscles back to being functional can be of some help.

Facet Joint Syndrome is the name given when the joints are excessively worn. This is more likely to develop in an older person or in someone who has not looked after the suppleness and flexibility of their back muscles. The condition of the muscles around the vertebrae will go a long way to determining how much pressure the joints of the spine are put under and therefore the wear and tear that they will experience over the long term.

Osteoarthritis is a painful condition that can often correct itself in time. After lots of wear and tear on the vertebrae, the body tries to compensate and lots of small bony growths begin to appear, which are a source of irritation to the tissue and nerves. Osteoarthritis is quite different from other forms of arthritis and by middle age most
people will have some. Over time the bone being laid down due to the condition builds up and the spine becomes more stable. Although this makes a person a lot less flexible, the pain subsides because the tissue and nerves have had time to adjust and compensate.

This is probably true for most pain, whereby if you are not continually aggravating it, over time the body will be able to compensate and the pain will go away for the most part. The trade off is, as the compensations are put in place you lose flexibility, the strength and suppleness of the muscles slowly diminishes and to avoid aggravating the painful area will mean curtailing a lot of your activities.

A fairly recent discovery for treating osteo arthritis in a natural way, is the use of glucosamine, chondroitin and neurontin. A good way to investigate and speak to others about the different choices, is to source out forums on the web that are concerned with this problem. My forum is one place you could start.

Another condition that is often the cause of chronic back pain is weak lower back and stomach muscles, to the point whereby any activity even standing or sitting upright for more than a couple of hours causes fatigue, tension and pain.

There is only one way to treat this condition and that is to strengthen the muscles, but unfortunately when a person has chronic pain it can sometimes be very hard to exercise without making it worse. I prefer a pool workout which takes the gravity factor out of it or my SLM Yoga program included with my self treatment program. Supplements such as a good protein powder or a custom program from an experienced and qualified naturopath can be a useful way to help build strength and suppleness back into the muscle tissue.

Keeping the muscles loose with good circulation is important and that is best done with the right exercise program and a good diet. Carrying out the self treatment program whilst getting weekly or fortnightly deep muscle work done (SLM Bodywork by preference) will get you to a point where you can start doing exercise programs such as Pilates to strengthen weak muscles that support the back.

A small percentage of back pain sufferers get other injuries or problems that can be the source of chronic pain including, fractures to the vertebrae from an accident or in the form of a stress fracture. This can come about when a particular point along the vertebrae is under a constant pressure when you exercise, such as when you have a bad muscle imbalance.

Scoliosis, is a curvature of the spine resulting in pain, usually from a build up of stress in the muscles and nerves around the vertebrae and, Scheuermann's disease,
a hereditary back disease which produces progressive rounding of the back
(kyphosis).

Again it's a case of stress building up in the muscles around the spine from overwork
or poor circulation, or imbalances creating a chronic aching pain for the sufferer. A
good bodywork therapist can effectively remove a lot of this stress and give you
relief but a gentle follow up exercise program is important to keep it away. As a rule
the more deep massage and bodywork you have the better, because as the superficial
muscles begin to respond and relax the therapist can get into the deeper layers with
the benefits lasting much longer.

A small percentage of people are either born with or develop through injury,
defective vertebral arches, known as spondylolysis. This condition occurs in only
around 3 to 7 percent of the population and it is usually the fifth lumbar vertebra that
is involved. Spondylolysis creates the necessary conditions for one vertebra to slip
forward in relation to the one below. Once this has occurred the condition is called
spondylolisthesis. This risk of the slippage occurring is very rare in people over
about 25 years of age and occurs mainly in growing adolescents during their heavy
sporting years. It can be the source of lower back pain or sciatica in some cases.

I have treated young sportsmen with spondylolisthesis and found that as long as their
muscles are balanced and loosened up regularly, kept healthy and strong, they can
continue playing even the highest level of competition without pain.

Ankylosing spondylitis is a form of chronic inflammation of the spine and the
sacroiliac joints. The sacroiliac joints are located in the low back where the sacrum
(the bone directly above the tailbone) meets the iliac bones (bones on either side of
the upper buttocks). Chronic inflammation in these areas causes pain and stiffness in
and around the spine. Over time, chronic spinal inflammation (spondylitis) can lead
to a complete cementing together (fusion) of the vertebrae, a process referred to as
ankylosis. Ankylosis leads to loss of mobility of the spine.

Ankylosing spondylitis is also a systemic rheumatic disease, meaning it can affect
other tissues throughout the body. Accordingly, it can cause inflammation in or injury
to other joints away from the spine, as well as other organs, such as the eyes, heart,
lungs, and kidneys. There are good sources of information on the internet that claim
to be able to put this condition into remission but as with other forms of arthritis it
should be very controllable through diet and supplements.

The important thing to remember if you suffer from a structural problem such as one
of these is there is a lot you can do for yourself and building a strong, healthy,
balanced muscle system to support these structural problems will go a long way to
taking your pain away.

I have also found that full body, deep tissue massage and acupressure session, such as
'SLM bodywork' gives good relief with all of the above structural conditions and
although often only temporary, finding something natural that minimises the pain and
discomfort from week to week with no negative side affects is a bonus for many
people.

Of course for those who have experienced it, the pain associated with deep tissue
massage can be seen as a negative however, this is considerably reduced when the
patient follows a healthy diet and is felt less and less as a person receives more
treatments. A good therapist will appreciate this and so will gradually build up the
pressure that they apply, as they make progress with your muscles.

Now just to make things a little bit more complicated, chronic back pain can also be
the result of a combination of any of the above conditions. This of course makes
finding one person who can cure the problem that much more difficult, so if you are
combining treatments it's very important you put the horse before the cart as it were
and get treatments in their correct order. For example, don't go for your deep tissue
massage after you have your spine adjusted by an osteopath, always do that just prior
to the adjustment.

Hopefully with the information in this book to guide you, plus the self help program
for back pain sufferers, achieving a successful treatment and rehabilitation of your
back pain, even when you have to consider more than one factor, won't be a
particularly difficult task. Best of all, it will largely be something you can do for
yourself with or without the help of your therapist. I would strongly advise if you
have an SLM Bodywork therapist in your area you make use of them and ensure the
results come a lot faster.

If you are one of the small percentage of people who are diagnosed with any of the
above conditions your specialist will no doubt be able to advise you of the latest
medical treatments that are available to you. It is also advisable that you do some
investigating yourself; for there should be no doubt that 'you are the person who has
the greatest interest in seeing your pain go away' and many of the good alternative
treatments may be neglected by your specialist.

Alternatively you may wish to simply make some changes to your lifestyle along the
lines I have mentioned earlier and covered in more detail in the self treatment
program. You can start by getting some good bodywork and manage the pain the best
you can by limiting your activities and undertaking some daily self help techniques
on yourself. To read more be sure to visit my site and take advantage of the information on hand that covers most things associated with back pain.

Other Symptoms.

I have found it quite interesting to note that while treating people for their back pain, whereby their spine is under a lot of pressure because the muscles around it are tight and out of balance, the muscles in the arms and legs can feel very weak. As I'm able to remove the pressure and congestion in the tissue around the vertebrae and their nerves, and improve the blood supply, especially around the neck and lower lumbar, the muscles in the arms and legs start feeling noticeably stronger very quickly without any change in activity levels by the patient.

You may also be surprised to be told that chest pain, tiredness, headaches or digestive problems, along with other symptoms, can all accompany back pain and it's no coincidence because they will often clear up fairly quickly when the back pain is effectively treated.

Before we finish here it is worth mentioning Degeneration in the back which is often blamed for back pain. Although this condition cannot be changed in many cases it doesn’t have to be a source of pain and I have found that if the muscles supporting the degenerated areas of the back are kept healthy, supple balanced and strong, a person can live with minimum or no discomfort. Very often an X-Ray that shows up degeneration will give the doctor a reason to explain away the pain when in fact it may have nothing to do with it. So keep that in mind next time your doctor says your structural issues are the reason for your pain and so there is nothing you can do about it.
INTERESTING FACTS.

Most people know what it's like to have a bad back. The worst ones can leave you laid up for weeks and others become a constant irritation that occasionally settle down but invariably return with unfailing regularity.

Reports I've read state that 20% of people at any one time suffer from low back pain, 80% of all adults will experience at least one episode of back pain in their lifetime, and around a half of those 80% will never actually find out the cause of their pain. This is of real concern considering it is acknowledged that the medical profession has, at best, a limited understanding of the condition.

An article I saw on the causes of lower back pain by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR), in the form of a review prepared by an outside group of medical professionals, stated:

'Even with today's technology, the exact reason or cause of low back problems can be found in very few people'

Other self proclaimed experts will say the cause of back pain is typically a sprain or strain to a ligament or muscle as they focus on the point where a person feels pain, without any consideration to what might be happening in the rest of the body to set up that sprain or strain.

The most common scenario for someone who gets back pain is for them to go and see their doctor. If the pain has been there for over a month or it involves nerve pain they get sent for X-rays or a more sophisticated scan and depending on what the doctor does or doesn't see they are prescribed drugs, stretching and/ or exercises, rest and perhaps surgery.

You may be sent to a conventional form of therapy where the practitioner, although confident and keen to do what they can, will tell you there is no simple cure for chronic back pain. At this point you have spent a lot of time and money and more often than not at the end of multiple sessions nothing has really changed.

In other words, once you have chronic or recurring back pain the majority of people are told to limit or curtail their activities for the foreseeable future and in some cases permanently. “You just can’t play tennis anymore, your back can’t handle it.”

I am still reminded by one of my patients that, before I fixed their daughters back pain, their specialist had told them she should never lift anything heavier than a pencil during her life and that her promising sports career should be stopped.
immediately. She went on to play many years of sport and as an adult does volunteer work with the State Rescue Services and very rarely has any back problems now.

This sort of comment can be very damaging to a person’s confidence as eventually they begin to believe that they will never fully get over their chronic or recurring back problem and they give up trying. I’m not sure about other countries but in Australia they even have pain management clinics set up in hospitals and run by doctors who teach people to live with their pain because nothing can be done to fix it, how ridiculous.

Many people believe back pain is a lot more of a problem than it actually is or should be. Have you ever tried to get hired by an employer who knows you have had a back injury or suffer from back pain?

The X-rays may sound like a good idea but unfortunately research has shown that even the best and most expensive imaging tests, like an MRI or CT scan may not show the simple muscle spasm or injured ligament that are responsible for the pain in around 85% of sufferers. Furthermore, even when abnormalities do show up on an X-ray or scan they are often not actually the cause of the person's pain. Each of these scans cost the person or health system hundreds of dollars each and are only necessary because of the incompetence of the practitioner referring for them.

"A 1990 study by Scott D Boden of the George Washington University Medical Centre, and his colleagues, looked at 67 individuals who said they had never had any back pain or sciatica (leg pain and weakness from lower back conditions). An MRI taken of the pain free subjects under the age of 60 showed that one fifth of them had one or more herniated discs. Half of the group had a bulging disc, a less severe condition often blamed for back pain, and of the adults older than 60, more than a third had a herniated disc visible with the MRI and nearly 80% had a bulging disc. Nearly every one of them showed some age related disc degeneration", yet they said they had never had any back pain.

"On the subject of X-rays a 10 year Swedish research effort demonstrated that, at least for adults under the age of 50, x-rays added little diagnostic value to office examinations with unexpected findings in only about one of every 2500 patients x-rayed."

"Secondly, epidemiological research revealed that many conditions of the spine that are often blamed for someone’s pain were actually unrelated to the symptoms.”

Large numbers of pain free people have been x-rayed in pre employment medical exams and for military induction in some countries, and multiple studies determined
that many spine abnormalities were as common in symptom free people as in those in pain.

X-rays can therefore be quite misleading."

"Thirdly, lower back x-rays unavoidably involve exposing sex organs to large doses of ionising radiation, more than a 1000 times greater than those associated with a chest x-ray."

"Lastly, even highly experienced radiologists interpret the same x-rays differently, leading to uncertainty and even inappropriate treatment."

Of course in some cases the x-ray or scan reveals the cause of pain to be a serious underlying disease such as cancer, bone infection or rare forms of arthritis, even diseases of other parts of the body. Fortunately though cases of this type are extremely rare and 98% of back pain patients are found to suffer from a relatively temporary injury, to the muscles, ligaments, bones or discs, set up by causes most therapists don’t have much idea about.

Another interesting fact that research has found is that most patients cannot recall a specific incident that brought on their suffering and in actual fact heavy lifting or injuries, though risk factors, are not the trigger in most cases. More likely back pain often just seems to creep up on you.

In my opinion the heavy lifting or injuries are in fact the cause if not the trigger in many cases. They can take a while to manifest into pain though because they start by creating a problem in muscles which leads to a restricted circulation, and therefore weakness that later on exposes the body to incidents that trigger the pain.

Another interesting survey that I came across was carried out by a research group from the University of Washington. This group decided to conduct a national survey of physicians from different specialties to see how they differed in the way they looked at the same patient.

This is interesting because it shows that the specialist you choose to see for a diagnosis will largely determine the actual diagnosis you get.

This survey found that rheumatologist's were twice as likely as physicians from other specialties to order laboratory tests in a search for arthritic conditions.

Similarly neurosurgeons were twice as likely to ask for imaging tests that would uncover herniated discs. And neurologists were three times more inclined to seek the results of electromyograms that would implicate the nerves. It's largely a case of
whoever you see is what you get, even though none of them are achieving significant results with the methods they employ.

If nothing else, all of this just goes to demonstrate the lack of understanding that exists resulting in the patient spending lots of money and being left in pain with few worthwhile options for treatment. Although these research statistics were largely from studies carried out in the United States, I'm sure that results in other countries wouldn’t show any significant differences. The fact is that most chronic back pain has the medical profession stumped.

An acute instance of back pain (a specific injury that causes immediate pain) that could be described as a rare occurrence will usually respond to a variety of treatments in terms of the pain settling down and slowly going away. The real problem exists with chronic back pain or recurring back pain which is still a major problem in terms of lost productivity, drain on the health budget and level of suffering.

It is worth noting however that often chronic back problems are set up by acute injuries not properly treated and therefore building up to be a chronic pain many months later.
THE MUSCLES.

I find it interesting that although so much of what goes on in the body revolves around the need for healthy muscles, there are very few true muscle specialists who have the expertise to treat them when things go wrong.

In medicine there exists every other specialist you can think of, heart, lung, kidney, nerve, bone and even brain specialists and the list goes on, but no true muscle specialists. Even though some medical specialists label themselves as such, their hands rarely touch the body to develop a feel for what is wrong. This is evidenced by the fact that so many people need to take pain killers and anti inflammatory drugs every day for the pain they have as a result of muscle problems. It is clear that whatever is being done at present to fix muscle problems and treat chronic pain is not working very well.

In my experience people are wasting a lot of money seeing the wrong therapists and because they don't get better, the drug companies are the ones that end up benefiting at the expense of our long term health.

One of my patients told me the story of a work colleague of his. He injured his back and was in a lot of pain so he was placed in the care of doctors and specialists arranged by his employer’s insurance company. Months later, after being constantly prescribed pain killers and anti-inflammatory drugs, he has now been registered as a morphine addict and his weight has increased from 80 kilograms to 110 kilograms. The drugs destroyed his liver and eventually he was told he had only four years to live unless he had a transplant. He still has his back pain and the doctors are considering the insertion of a slow release morphine drip in his body. A couple of years ago he was just a normal average person without pain but now, as a result of his blind faith in the medical system, his life is in the balance. I doubt that this would be an isolated case!

It tells me that the specific training available to health professionals for the treatment of chronic pain is far from adequate. Not to mention the large amount of our insurance dollars being wasted every day that drive premiums up unnecessarily.

As yet there is no university course a person can undertake to learn all about the muscles and the part they play in setting up chronic pain. Sure people can learn the anatomy and physiology of the body but I'm talking about a course that teaches a therapist how to work on the muscles with their hands to take away a person’s chronic pain. Forget the machines, exercises and stretches because they don’t work.
It involves treating the full body, incorporating all sort of lifestyle factors and getting ‘hands on’ with the body. Nearly all treatments break those rules and when they do, their effectiveness goes out the window and they don’t get a lasting result.

It is my belief that most people suffering chronic pain are doing so unnecessarily, more because of a lack of knowledge and inadequate treatment methods rather than their problem being incurable. So if you are a chronic pain sufferer I urge you not to give up, just be more demanding in what you expect from the therapists you see and if you don’t get a noticeable improvement from your 3rd or so treatment, move on..

On a physical level....

Muscles need energy to be able to work properly and the level of energy available to them is determined primarily by a person’s diet, circulation and fitness.

Muscles will only work, that is extend and contract properly, while they are functional, strong and healthy enough. They must receive an adequate supply of nutrients via an efficient circulatory system that also removes carbon dioxide and waste products produced during any activity.

There comes a point in time, during the day or a particular activity, when overworked muscles need to be rested and given time to recover. If they are not, they will begin to fatigue and tighten causing the other, still working muscles, to compensate for them in some way.

Remember it is these compensations that cause the first stage of imbalances accumulating in the body which is the first stage of a person having the potential to injure themselves more easily or ending up with chronic pain.
This patient has a problem with some of the muscles in his left arm affecting the muscles in his Rhomboid and Latissimus Dorsi. Below the shoulder blade on the left you can see the missing Latissimus Dorsi muscle and how the Teres Major looking overworked at the bottom edge of the (L) shoulder blade is compensating for it.

When a muscle extends it doesn't stretch like you would imagine elastic does, it actually extends like a telescope and then retracts again as it contracts, providing it is well lubricated at the time. That is why if you insist on stretching your muscles, it is important to do so when the muscles are well warmed up not as a warm up. You must also do your stretches slowly in conjunction with breathing and relaxing as you let go of tension they may contain.

Athletes I look after are advised not to stretch but rather focus on excellent nutrition, a good warm up and warm down exercise routine and weekly or fortnightly deep tissue massage as maintenance. As a consequence they have a lot fewer injuries than their peers.

Personally, I'm not a fan of stretching and believe the only stretching worth doing are some isometric stretches. This is what I was taught and it has been confirmed by a study completed at the University of Sydney and the Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga NSW by Army physiotherapist Rod Pope and his colleagues. They concluded that stretching before you exercise in a bid to prevent injuries was a waste of time.

He and his team monitored 2600 Army recruits over one year using periodic randomised, controlled trials.

Some of the recruits stretched leg muscles before exercise and some did not, yet there was no differences in injury rates between the two groups -- and not just because too few recruits in either group became injured to register a significant effect.

"We were able to rule out even a quite small effect of stretching," says Pope. "This has not been researched properly before," he explains. "Stretching was assumed to work in preventing injuries, but there was no evidence to suggest it did."

The work has been accepted for publication by Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, the journal of the American Journal of Sports Medicine. Interestingly enough these finding have been repeated in similar study’s since then yet nearly 10 years later, Australian physiotherapists and personal trainers still advocate stretching before exercise to prevent injuries. What hope have we got?

This report looks at stretching before exercise to prevent injuries. It doesn't mean you shouldn't complete a thorough warm up of your muscles with a number of different
exercises that incorporate the various movements in your sport before you engage in any physical activity because this will definitely help prevent injuries.

As you move a muscle through its range of movement it should continuously contract and relax or shortens and lengthens.

The movement of the muscle acts as a pump to bring blood and lymph containing oxygen and nutrients such as glycogen into the working muscle and flush out waste products like carbon dioxide and lactic acid.

The more weight being carried or force being exerted by the muscle the larger the supply of oxygen and nutrients needed and the more waste products there will be to take away.

These waste products are one of the main reasons you are encouraged to warm down well with gentle exercise after you finish your workout. The idea is to flush out your muscles and leave them with a fresh blood supply for recovery and ready to work again the next day.

A massage is another way of having your muscles flushed out whereby the waste and toxins are put back into the bloodstream to be processed by the liver and converted into energy. That's why after a massage you can feel washed out for a while then later you feel loose and energised.

Whether this flow of blood in and out of the muscle is carried out efficiently or not depends largely upon circulation which in turn depends on, for one, how tight the muscles are (stress!). Also the things we have been talking about in relation to an 'out of balance' body are a major consideration as is diet, posture and technique.

When a person exercises regularly they slowly develop an improved circulatory system that handles this increased blood flow and allows the muscles to work longer and harder before they become fatigued.

However when the blood flow is not sufficient to support the work being done by the muscles they become fatigued and tighten up and a person gets tired or starts to cramp up. Although pushing through this point is how we increase our fitness level it is also one of the reasons why you can get stiff and sore for a couple of days after you start a new sport or exercise.

It is worth noting that caution is recommended when you are pushing through this point of fatigue because, although it helps to build up your up fitness level, you are more prone to injury when your muscles are tired. Tired tight muscles don't provide strong support for the joints making them prone to becoming unstable if put under a
heavy or unbalanced load. That's why if you are training in that fatigue zone you are better to do it with controlled exercise rather than sports where your joints are under an unbalanced load, like basketball, touch football or tennis.

If you go too far past the point of fatigue during activity or exercise it's possible to damage the muscles to some degree and begin to set up long term problems that can set up imbalances, weakness and come back later as a chronic pain.

This is one of the reasons why athletes and active people need to eat well and get regular sleep and massage, to keep their muscles in good condition ensuring they can cope with the higher activity level than the average person and not be more prone to injury than the average person.

If muscles are neglected and continually put under pressure, not fed properly or warmed up and down properly, their condition will deteriorate steadily over time and chronic pain, or worse still, damage to the joint they support could well be the end result.

In some areas of the body, such as the arm or leg, this can cause the tight muscle to trap or press on a nerve generating a local or referred pain such as sciatica in the back, golfers elbow or carpel tunnel syndrome in the hand.

When we develop a problem in our body the level or intensity of the pain we feel will vary from person to person. This is dependent on the strength and condition of the tissue, which in turn depends on things like lifestyle, diet, age, genetics and fitness level.
PAIN ASSOCIATED WITH MUSCLE IMBALANCE.

As a general rule, I have found that the people who suffer from the worst pain and recurring injury problems caused by muscle imbalances are those who exercise the most but don't support that exercise with the right nutrition. Especially those who have hyper mobile joints that can be put out of place more easily when put under pressure, people genetically predisposed to the hyper mobility or from constant long term stretching.

It is important to realise that everyone has muscle imbalances but the further your body gets from being strong and supple the more likely you are to experience pain from them.

As you have heard, I am not a fan of stretching because stretching changes the delicate relationship between the ligaments and muscles as they combine to provide strength and support for the joints. The pressure from stretching invariably ends up in the joint stretching the ligament and connective tissue rather than the muscle so it might make you feel supple but in the joint rather than restoring length and function to the muscle.

Stretching the ligaments is not a good idea because they stay stretched resulting in the joint becoming looser, less strong and stable and thereby more susceptible to injury. This weaker joint that is put under pressure, overloads the muscles that are supporting it causing them to tighten to compensate. So in reality stretching can end up causing tighter muscles, the very thing you stretch for in the first place.

I much prefer to see warm ups for sports involve exercises that oxygenate the body, get the blood circulation going and slowly take the muscles through a full range of movement.

From a therapist’s perspective, a person that stretches a lot over a long period of time has a very loose feel to their joints and a contracted belly of the muscles. (I cover this in much more detail in the self treatment program.)

Stretching will do nothing to correct muscle imbalances rather it forces the body to compensate for them which can in some cases help starve off pain for a short time but eventually leads to worse pain that is more deep seated and chronic.

When our body gets 'out of balance' it can have a big influence on the stress that builds up in our soft tissue. This is because muscles work a lot harder to carry the weight of gravity around when it's not centered. Whenever we are sitting or standing, and especially when running around and exercising, carrying a weight that is 'off
'balance' is a lot more tiring on the muscles than it is when the same weight is 'balanced'.

You can feel the effect of this yourself. Support a weight like a brick with both hands, arms raised above your head, then start to move the weight off centre as you lean it out to one side. You will feel certain muscles have to tighten up to provide more support for the weight as it moves to the side then they relax again as you bring the weight back into the centre. When weight is carried more evenly throughout your whole muscle system it feels lighter.

When our body is out of balance, certain muscles carry more of your weight than they should and become overworked, fatigued and tight and other muscles carry less of the weight than they should and become weak. Such as with a short right leg for example. This results in the muscles on the outside or lateral side of the short leg becoming overworked, tighter and stronger and the muscles on the inside or medial side of the leg becoming under utilised and weaker.

It's a situation that sets up an imbalance and causes a problem that gets diagnosed as 'runner's knee'. In reality it shouldn't be around long enough for it to get a name because if treated correctly by balancing the body and removing the compensations around the knee it clears up very quickly.

An imbalance in the body is visible to the trained eye, because it changes the shape, size and tension level in the muscles and can cause the body to look twisted in some way. (see below)
The two photographs above show the same patient before and after a one hour SLM treatment. He was complaining of pain in his lower back on the right hand side. In the BEFORE picture, you can see his hip and head drops down a bit on the left side and the muscles in his back appear bunched up on the right side. His whole back looks tight and heavy. In the AFTER photo, his whole back looks much more balanced and upright and his pelvis appears more level, putting less stress on his lower vertebrae. When he came in he had only been in pain for a couple of days and this one treatment was enough to take away the pain.

The most obvious effect of this is when the muscles in one leg and around the hip joint tighten and cause that leg to appear shorter than the other.

In Eastern medicine it is taught that for good health and longevity a person needs to have a balanced and supple spine. For this reason people who suffer from chronic back pain can also suffer from tiredness, headache, nausea and various other symptoms that go hand in hand with a tight and twisted spine.

Even people who don't suffer back pain but have a tight and twisted spine can suffer these symptoms. If the tension is released from their back muscles and their pain taken away, these other symptoms usually disappear and a person will notice a significant improvement in their overall well-being and energy levels.

Our muscular system needs proper maintenance if we are to expect that we can avoid these imbalances accumulating. Although they're an inevitable part of life, they can be minimised to the extent that a person can be mostly pain free by following good advice. By that I mean a good diet, the right exercise and deep tissue, full body massage once a month (SLM Bodywork if it's available), by a therapist that knows how to balance the muscular system and open up the flow of circulation. If you start searching you will realise that people skilled at this are hard to find.

Through a lack of education and awareness, proper maintenance of our muscles is something most people neglect to do. This may be due to the fact that few therapists can provide the service, or people are under the impression that if they eat a reasonably good diet and exercise 3 or 4 times a week that's all the maintenance their muscles need.

Also people have a tendency to wait for a pain or symptom to become chronic before having something done about it. As far as the body is concerned, prevention is always better than cure. By the time a symptom gets really bad, the cause will often have been building up in the body for a long time and will be more difficult to diagnose and treat due to all the compensations that are there, especially if it is a recurring problem.
The pain that results from having muscle imbalances causing a short leg tends to occur when we increase the stress levels in our body, from things like over-exercising, poor nourishment, bad posture, working long hours or a lack of sleep. Stress will take away whatever little suppleness is left in our muscles creating the potential for irritation to an area that eventually becomes inflamed and painful.

Perhaps surprisingly, something as simple as getting enough sleep or adequate rest is very important when managing pain, as a lack of it can easily become part of a cycle.

For example, when lying in bed or trying to sleep is uncomfortable due to your pain, you get up and move around which doesn't give your body enough rest and so makes the pain worse. This in turn makes sleeping or lying down more uncomfortable etc. etc. and the cycle goes on.

Often, the result is the use of pain killers or sleeping tablets to help you cope. That is not a good solution because research has shown that long term use of these acidic medicines ends up irritating the nervous system and heightening the body's sensitivity to pain, thereby exacerbating the problem.

When one leg shortens because of muscle problems on one side it affects the whole body, whenever we sit, stand or exercise but especially the lower back. That's the point where the tilted pelvis/ sacrum meets the spine resulting in a lot of stress and pressure building up around the L4, L5, S1 region. Sometimes this results in twisted or tilted vertebrae that an X-Ray or imaging will pick up but more often just causes problems with the muscles and ligaments which does not show up with imaging.

When a pelvis is tilted this way the Erector Spinae muscles, between the neck and lower back, which play a large part in supporting the spine, become stretched or lengthened on one side and contracted or shortened on the other (see picture).
As you would appreciate working the guy in the picture above by treating his lower back would go nowhere but I would be willing to bet the large majority of therapists would approach it exactly that way.

After a while and if not corrected these muscles stay this way and become the underlying cause of pain that can be felt in the back, neck, shoulder or even the knee, a fact that very few therapists take into account during diagnosis and treatment of these conditions.

Muscles tighten up to protect and strengthen an unstable area and minimise the chance of a person doing damage to themselves, such as through dislocation. This tightening of the muscles is felt as a restriction of movement or lack of flexibility.

The trouble is that once muscles around the joint tighten up to provide this extra strength and support and are like that for any length of time they often stay contracted permanently, or at least until they get the right bodywork treatment to release them. No amount of exercise or stretching will release that contraction in most cases, especially if a person does a lot of heavy training whilst they are tight and the body learns how to move without relying on the problem muscles.

This pattern unfolds slowly over time depending primarily on diet and how much jarring and physical activity a person puts their body through. It is largely related to many of the physical symptoms of aging. The simplest way I find to explain aging is:
'The speed at which we age is directly related to the speed at which our circulation slows' up.

It is a situation that is accelerated by poor choices of diet, the absorption of chemicals, a lack of sleep and excess in things such as work and exercise. On the other hand deterioration in our circulation is slowed down by all the right things like good diet, natural remedies, sensible exercise, plenty of good quality sleep and a low stress, happy life.

For the average person, or someone undergoing only occasional physical activity or exercise, pain caused by an 'out of balance' body or muscles, is usually much more manageable by any number of different healing methods. It is the more physically active people who show up the inadequacies of many of the treatment methods available.

Basically it's a case of the more pressure a person puts on their body through their lifestyle, exercise and sport, the more critical it is for them to have healthy, balanced muscles.

People who are not particularly active, in that they don't do any structured exercise, or work long hours at a desk or physical job, usually have their back pain relieved with rest, short term use of medication and perhaps some treatment to the localised pain area. Imbalances are rarely too significant and the increased stress levels will usually right themselves in time if a person practices good posture and rests up a little. The trade off is that these people are normally weaker than the active person who exercises regularly, and their body can be more susceptible should they suddenly increase their physical activity out of the blue, such as spend a day in the garden.
A SHORT LEG.

Often when I start talking about having a short leg and the part it plays in chronic pain I get met with raised eyebrows and skepticism but the fact remains, a short leg is a sure sign of muscle imbalances and they are responsible for the majority of cases of back pain and sciatica. Obviously other things come into play as well but the short leg, or the muscle imbalances need to be dealt with to for the pain to go away permanently, especially for the active person.

Most doctors and therapists explain this away with, “everyone has a short leg and it doesn’t make any difference” but it does for a large percentage of people, especially when the discrepancy is quite noticeable, the person’s body is weak or they have hyper mobile joints. A short leg also adds to the muscle imbalances because it makes your weight distribute unevenly throughout your body every moment you are sitting or standing. Ask any therapist who can fix pain quickly and effectively and they will agree without hesitation, because it is the only approach that works every time for a long time.

Let me try to explain how simply this 'out of balance' state and short leg can come about. At the top of our leg bone, or femur, the neck of the femur sits in a socket that makes up the hip joint. (see diagram 1)

![Diagram 1](image1)

![Diagram 2](image2)

Diagram 1 shows the pelvis with the neck of the Femur sitting in the hip socket the way it should be. Diagram 2 shows what happens when muscles in the hip or back
contract or shorten, causing the Femur to be affected, drawing it out and slightly upwards, which causes the leg to shorten a little. The dotted outline on Diagram 2 shows the original position of the Femur. If this femur is correct on one side of the body and out on the other you have a short leg and tilted pelvis.

Being a ball and socket joint it allows for a variety of movements of the leg from the hip, so it relies heavily on the muscles in the lower back, the leg and around the hip and buttocks for support.

The condition of each of these supporting muscles, relative to their ability to contract and lengthen with movement, or their resting length, will determine the angle at which the neck of the femur sits in its socket. (see Diagram. 2)

If problems with any of the relevant muscles on one side of the body cause this neck to draw up or downwards slightly, it will effect the length of that leg in relation to the other side. This causes the pelvis to tilt and other muscles in the body to start compensating.

Unfortunately because of our lifestyle these days, changes to the muscles supporting one of the hip joints can come about very easily, either through an injury or accident from overuse or through something as simple as bad posture over a period of time.

Whether any problem with these muscles becomes permanent or not depends largely on things like posture, stress levels and whether the original problem is given the correct treatment at the time. When the correct treatment is not received, the supporting muscles don't do their job properly and so excessive wearing of the hip or knee joint can happen, resulting in the need for joint replacement surgery later in life, something I am sure everyone would want to avoid if at all possible.

Once a person has a short leg their pelvis is drawn down on that side and up on the other. This causes tension to build up in the lower back and in the erector spinae muscles along side the spine into the neck. When this happens it’s possible for the spine to curve and some of the vertebrae in the back to become twisted or tilted especially in people with weak muscles. (see picture)

Although this patient's pelvis appears level, you will notice it does drop slightly on the left side and there is a bunching in the right shoulder. The stress that has built up in the muscles in the back itself, especially the stress lines in the muscles in the lower third.
The patient was complaining of an intermittent sharp pain in her lower back, on the right side, when she played golf. I found the muscles were more contracted on the right side from her shoulder/ back and, down into her hip and leg. After about four treatments the pain had gone but, due to the long term build up of tension in that area, I advised her she would need to continue to work on her back in general, with gentle loosening type exercises before and after golf, and each day for a period of time to ensure the problem does not recur.
This photo above demonstrates a more extreme case where the discrepancy is over 2.5cm. In this case the distortion to the skeleton is very pronounced and the pain very chronic.

It is difficult enough for the average person to get around comfortably and even pain free when they are in this condition but for an active person it becomes virtually impossible to stay active and not get injured. How a body gets like this in the first place often relates to the way it is used in life either in a job or sport and activities.

Having one leg shorter than the other, apart from being extremely common, varies from person to person or even from week to week, by a difference of anything from 2mm, or a fraction of an inch, right up to 30mm or more making walking without a limp nearly impossible.

If you ever see an old person in the street walking with great difficulty you will usually notice how tilted or twisted their pelvis looks. They have probably had a short leg for many years and it has deteriorated so much they find walking very painful and difficult.

A short leg and tilted pelvis is actually a condition that affects the majority of adults and is a major contributor to the decrease in flexibility that occurs as we get older. This becomes very obvious if you ever have that imbalance removed.

I remember treating a patient, in his mid forties, who had been on the U.S. Olympic diving team in his youth but had never been able to touch his toes. He said no matter how much stretching he did back then, or even now, he could never get flexible enough.

After working on him weekly, for a couple of months to remove his muscle imbalances lengthening the shortened erector spinae muscles and hamstrings and fixing the chronic back pain he told me he was now able to touch his toes. When speaking to him a year or so later he told me he could still do that.

In practice I have found that the bigger the leg length discrepancy, the more likely it is a person will suffer pain or a lack of flexibility and mobility.

It seems the older a person gets, the more the compensations cover up the imbalances, the price being a loss of flexibility and mobility. This probably explains why, as people get older, they get past their chronic pain except perhaps when it involves irritation to a nerve. Also, as people get older their exercise and activity levels often decrease and ultimately it's the activity that highlights the problems associated with muscle imbalances in the first place.
If you think about aging, it is generally accompanied by a gradual seizing up (shrinking) and weakening of the physical body that takes place over many years. This is evidenced by the fact that programs designed to slow down or stop the aging process, or make a person feel more energised and alive, deal specifically with improving circulation and getting suppleness back into the physical body. Like keeping your body at the right weight, physically supple and mentally relaxed with things like a healthy diet, meditation, massage, plenty of protein in your diet, tissue and organ cleansing and exercise.

Keeping your muscles healthy and supple into your old age and having a balanced pelvis are very achievable goals and something we all should strive for. It is an ongoing effort that is required though and something that needs to be incorporated into your lifestyle with the right diet and exercise treatment, along with vital self treatment techniques that will work to take away any problems that already exist. All the information you need to help you achieve this is contained in my self treatment program.
STRESS AND ITS ROLE IN BACK PAIN.

One of the biggest problems today is that people don't maintain their body at a level that will keep up with their chosen lifestyle and as a result their body begins to break down with injury and illness. Everything that causes stress to the body will bring it that much closer to developing a physical problem related to pain.

Working on the muscles, using your hands, is a great way of connecting what you feel in the tissue with what a person is feeling in the way of pain. After many years of doing this you are able to pick up on the many subtleties that exist in a body that’s in pain, compared to one that isn’t.

Similarly other lifestyle factors can also be felt in the body’s soft tissue. Things such as if a person worries too much or doesn't get enough sleep, if they eat well or not, how much exercise they do, even how strong and healthy they are generally. These things all show up in the muscles in the way they feel.

Most of the things that make someone’s body feel different from that of a relaxed, strong and healthy body can be put under the heading of 'stress'.

Stress is the body's worst enemy and on its own can be the trigger for many of the pains and illnesses from which people suffer. If you have chronic back pain for example, high stress levels will make the intensity and incidence of your pain much greater than it would otherwise be. This means that one way you can work on your chronic back pain is by addressing the things in your life that are causing your body stress.

A person's emotional state or how you perceive things has an important bearing on how much tension or stress is contained in your physical body. For example, two people could have exactly the same situation to deal with but it is only a source of stress for one of them because the other doesn't see it as a problem. It all depends on the way you look at it.

You must remember the way you perceive things and what causes you stress, is more about the way you have been conditioned throughout your life, it doesn't mean you are looking at things the right or wrong way. It is like the person in pain who gives up thinking they aren’t fixable and the other person in exactly the same condition that never gives up, always believing somewhere out there is a solution.

Some healing methods such as spiritual healing and meditation, counselling or hypnotherapy or NLP, much like psychiatry and psychotherapy, work on the mind as a way of releasing the stress that is causing pain or symptoms in the physical body, in
some cases with great success. Other methods like naturopathy will release stress through nutrition and supplements, balancing the body chemically and others again such as what I specialize in, SLM Bodywork, will release it through working directly on the physical body.

The mind is incredibly powerful and can be working for or against you, it is your choice. It cannot be disregarded when you are searching for the cause of your pain and although it won't always provide the answer, sometimes it will.

When you use the word 'stress' most people immediately think it is when you worry about things too much or have too much on your mind to organise or think about. Although this is a common source of stress, just as importantly, there are many other things that can create high stress levels in the body. Things like over eating or eating the wrong foods such as too much sugar or carbohydrates, or foods you may be allergic to. Stress can also come from over exercise, not enough sleep, muscle imbalances, poor posture, in fact anything that throws the body out of balance either physically, chemically or emotionally could be considered a source of stress.

When I am treating pain in the body with SLM Bodywork, it is much easier to fix that pain in a person who is not chemically or emotionally stressed because these stresses make the body more resistant to letting go or changing. For a therapist to be able to loosen, lengthen and rebalance the muscles in the body the tissue needs to be healthy and responsive and it is a fact that stressed tissue is not.

I treated a lady the other week and commented to her on how healthy her body felt. It was soft and supple and although she had some tight areas causing her upper back and neck pain they dropped out very quickly and easily because of the good condition of her tissue. She told me that she ate mostly organic food, lots of fruit and vegetables, plenty of protein and hardly any processed carbohydrates.

A couple of weeks later she rang and asked if she could come in again as she had strained her neck at the gym. This time when I started massaging her I immediately noticed quite a difference in her stress level of her tissue in that it was quite stiff and not nearly as easy to soften as it had been 2 weeks earlier. I commented on this an asked her if her diet had changed in the past few days and she confirmed it had. She had eaten quite a bit of bread and pasta in the past four days when she normally wouldn’t. It obviously didn’t agree with her.

This happened again just recently with a guy who had driven to Sydney from interstate and saw me as soon as he arrived when is body was great and then after being here a week when he had to eat out a lot and on the road. The difference was very noticeable as the stress in his tissue was much more obvious.
Stressed tissue is also more sensitive which means that it is not only more difficult to change, but the stressed person feels more pain as you try, not a good mix for the patient.

It is the long held belief of some, that the negative emotions we experience to different events in our lives are stored in our physical body in the tissue as stress. Over time this stress from bottled up emotions can accumulate and cause pain and sickness that can only be properly cured by dealing with the emotions that caused the stress in the first place.

Many people will dismiss this and other similar theories as unscientific and unproven. However, as with any practice that has stood the test of time, there are plenty of people who will say it worked for them when everything else failed.

The reason for mentioning these things in relation to back pain is to point out that there are many factors which can influence the level or incidence of stress and thereby the pain that we feel. There are just as importantly, many ways of helping ourselves on a physical level summarised by; focussing on and caring about the way we think, eat, and live our lives in general. It's up to you to determine the effect many of these things have on your particular pain.

Two people can have the same physical imbalances and stresses in their body but only one of them feels pain because of 'other factors' in their life. This is what makes it so hard for people to find the solution to their particular problem.

Basically the more strong, supple, healthy and relaxed the tissue in our body is, the more resistant it is to the stresses or pressure that cause us pain or sickness and when we do get a problem, the easier it responds and becomes well again.

Just as you can counter the build up of dirt and dust in your house through regular cleaning, you can also counter the build up of stress and tension in your body through a healthy lifestyle and maintenance in your day to day life. Start slowly bit by bit and notice the changes after a few months.

Probably the worst thing about stress is we condition ourselves in the way we eat, think and even hold ourselves over many years and these habits are hard to break quickly. That why understanding the source of your problems is the most important place to start, then working daily to make little changes that will eventually filter through to your body and change the way you feel. With my guidance this is something you can most definitely hope to achieve, all you require is the desire and discipline to see it through. Hopefully the fact that you have downloaded and are now reading this book shows you have reached that point.
QUESTIONS YOU MAY NEED ANSWERED.

Whilst working in my pain clinic for many years and through the forum I have on my site, I have been asked many questions by back pain sufferers. I have answered some of the more common ones below in case they are questions you would also like answers to.

Q. How do I determine if I have a short leg and by how much?

A. The first thing to do is loosen up your body as much as you can perhaps with some very slow, gentle stretches on the floor so that you get an accurate picture. Then lie on your back on the floor and have someone make sure you are lying straight. Get them to check to see how your heels line up and if they don't, how much difference there is. The bone on the inside of your ankle is a good point to compare.

Another way is to stand on level ground with your weight even on both legs and have someone use a spirit level to check the alignment of the prominent hip bone on both sides of your pelvis. From this you can determine how much higher one hip is than the other. If you put a heel lift in your shoe as a result, be sure to put it in the shoe on the same side as the lower hip because the shorter leg is pulled down when standing on the level ground remember, so it makes that side of the pelvis look lower.

Remember a rotated pelvis can be just as aggravating to the back and spine and may not show up as a short leg. When you lie comfortable on your back and relax your legs a rotated pelvis will show up because both feet will point or be heading in the same direction, the opposite direction to the forward rotation, i.e. if both feet point left you have a forward rotation of the right hip.

A short leg is not a cause of pain but more an indication that you have muscle imbalances that are present causing an uneven pressure to be applied to some of the joints in your body. Don’t believe anyone who says they can fix a short leg through stretches or trying to manipulate your pelvis and pull on your leg. Similarly putting a lift in your shoe won’t fix it or doing an exercise program. If you spent your whole life on your back the short leg wouldn’t matter but when you are standing or sitting all day it will cause a lot of tightness and irritation in some joints and that is why you need to take a holistic approach to removing the muscle imbalances to get rid of it.

Q. If the cause of most back pain (85%) is muscular why doesn't massage get rid of it?
A. Massage has the effect of relaxing the muscles and taking away the tension that has built up, mainly as compensations, around the painful area. It doesn't deal with the cause of that tension, normally muscle imbalances in various parts of the body. Nor does it stimulate weak flaccid muscles or restore length and function to muscles. These are both critical things when fixing (not just relieving) back pain.

Sometimes a person with back pain can find a massage makes them feel worse for a day or two. This is because the tissue around a painful area is often weak and inflamed. The massage works on already weak and inflamed tissue making you feel worse for a couple of days, until it settles down again. When this happens it just means the real problem muscles haven’t been fixed and your therapist is probably on the wrong track.

Q. The other day I went to bend over and felt a slight twinge in my lower back but I stopped quickly and it didn't amount to anything. Does that mean I have to be especially careful in future or my back will go? What can I do about it?

A. Yes the tension level in your muscles is such that you do not have the flexibility needed to bend over the way you attempted to, especially if you are trying to pick up a weight at the same time. Your back muscles are in a vulnerable state at this point and so you should be very careful to ensure you don't end up in pain. Do some loosening up exercises for the erector spinae muscles such as those in my self treatment program. Take the twinge as a tap on the shoulder and don’t make the body hit you with a sledge hammer before you get the message!

Q. Why did my acute back pain turn into chronic pain?

A. If your acute back pain was from a trauma, like a blow or strain to your back muscles, (an isolated incident) and it didn't recover properly then you didn't get the right treatment regardless of what you were told. When this sort of problem is not dealt with correctly the problem muscles in your body cause weakness and muscle imbalances and this can easily cause your chronic pain.

On the other hand it's quite likely your acute pain episode was an injury waiting to happen. A weakness in the area already existed as a result of imbalances you already had. What you did to trigger the pain was simply raised your stress levels or over extended yourself in some way, the straw that broke the camel's back so to speak.

Once the injured tissue has recovered and the inflammation from the acute pain episode has settled down you have to lower your stress levels and deal with any muscle imbalances that are present. This will not only fix the chronic pain but it will also remove the potential for an acute episode to get you again. The SLM Yoga exercise routine that comes with my self treatment program is very good for this.
The point at which you now feel the pain would have become a weak point that is being irritated by your movements because of the imbalances and higher stress levels. Once you fix the cause of the irritation you will get proper long term relief from your pain.

Q. Why did my pain start in the first place, I don’t remember doing anything, I just woke up with it?

A. Your pain started as an irritation at the weakest point along a muscle (where it attaches) caused by muscle tightness, set up by imbalances in your body.

You probably did something the day before to over extend the muscle and then during the night when your body cooled down the pain became obvious.

Unless something is done to find and treat the underlying cause, like a muscle imbalance or heightened stress levels, or your body manages to compensate for the irritation, there will be no reason for the pain to go away naturally. Especially if your lifestyle and posture continues to irritate it. The idea of resting until the pain goes away which a lot of doctors will recommend you do will do little to deal with the cause of the pain and so at some time in the future it is likely to return.

Q. Why does my pain stop me going to sleep or wake me up early in the morning even though I'm still tired? When I’m up and about during the day it hardly bothers me.

A. When you go to bed and sleep the blood, which is normally stored in your muscles during the day keeping them supple, drains to your organs and your muscles tighten up. That's why you a bit feel stiff in the morning when you first wake up. When these muscles tighten and with no movement there is a lack of circulation and the aching is your body’s way of getting you up and moving to get the circulation going again. You would probably experience the same pain or ache if you were to over-extend yourself during the day which would cause the muscles to fatigue and tighten. When you are awake, and moving around normally, or up on your feet where your body mechanics are different, the problem muscle(s) are warmed up and thus looser and the irritation is minimal so you are not particularly aware of it.

Q. I have been told to use heat for relief and someone else told me to use ice. Which is best and why?

A. For a tight or contracted muscle causing your pain heat is the best way of getting the muscle to relax but be sure to place the heat on the problem muscle rather than the point of irritation and inflammation where you feel the pain. Ice is an effective way
of reducing inflammation and when necessary should be placed on the point of irritation just for 10 minutes only.

Bear in mind that ice in itself is a source of trauma to the tissue evidenced by the fact that it is painful when applied and therefore should be used sparingly. Where possible the use of compression through strapping is better when the problem is in the limbs but with back pain, heat higher up the muscle that attaches at the point of irritation and some ice for a short time on the point of irritation, will be a good combination.

Q. What is the best exercise to do for my back pain? My doctor told me walking but that just makes me feel worse.

A. Often the cause of the irritation that generates lower back pain is moving around with a tilted or rotated pelvis which means badly aligned vertebrae in the lower lumbar or a tight shortened muscle pulling on the area. Exercise such as walking often causes irritation and inflammation because of the unnatural movement it sets off in the sacrum and lower vertebrae pulling at the already tight muscles and ligaments in the lower back. Walking is only good so long as it doesn't make you worse which happens normally where people don’t have a pelvic twist or tilt.

If walking irritates your back it is better to do exercises that don't, ones that don't involve excessive movement with gravity. My self treatment program will go into this further and includes the SLM Yoga and especially water exercises which are great to take the gravity factor out and strengthen your body with minimum movement.

Q. My pain alternates between my lower back and my neck, usually one or the other but not normally both at the same time. Why is that and which one should I be dealing with first?

A. For every point of tension in the body there will be a balancing point of tension. For example if your knee feels tight and painful there will usually be muscles in your back on the same side that will also be tight as a balance, even though you aren't consciously aware of being tight in that area.

On occasions your knee pain may go away and you will be aware of the tightness, perhaps pain, in your back. But whenever your knee hurts you will no longer feel the back tightness or pain.

This is just the way the body works and something I've noticed during my years in the clinic. The same problem is responsible for both pains but you will only be bothered by one area at any one time. In your case both your lower back and neck pain are probably caused by your erector spinae muscles on the same side being
contracted which is very common. You can simply and successfully deal with that using exercises that effectively release the erector spinae muscles. I cover them in my self treatment program. This fact is a good example of how the body connects and any treatment to properly fix a pain you have must involve the whole body not just an isolated part.

Q. I have suffered on and off from back pain for years now. After I get massage it feels alright and then a month or two later, without doing anything in particular, it comes back. Why is that?

A. It settles down because the treatment you get is relaxing the tight muscles and stimulates the circulation, but not dealing with their dysfunction or long term problems. If you are happy to get the massage every month, over time your need for it should lessen but if you would like to speed that up you should be combining the massage with regularly doing self treatment techniques and in time your problem should go away permanently.

Alternatively your lifestyle (job etc) may be putting extra pressure on muscles that are causing your pain and you will just need the semi regular massage as maintenance to keep things in check.

Q. Who is the best person to see for my back pain? One of my friends wants me to see their chiropractor and another says not to and that I should see her massage therapist.

A. There are many forms of therapy and all have a different way of treating pain in the body. What works for some doesn't necessary work for others. It is not the type of therapy you should be worried about but the particular therapist and the approach they use. It depends largely on the cause of your particular pain, the condition of your soft tissue and how it will respond to the various therapies. One way of you being able to determine that and make the right decisions for your body is to work with my self treatment program.

Generally, the important thing to do is find someone who comes highly recommended and in most cases after you have had 2 or 3 treatments you should feel a significant improvement that lasts at least a week. If you have been treated a couple of times and haven't got a good result and the therapist isn’t talking to you about your imbalances and taking a holistic approach to treating your back pain then you should probably try someone else. Just because someone works for your friend doesn't mean it will work for you, and visa versa.

If you understand your body and its problems you can work with your therapist guiding them as to your tight areas while you do the right exercises and self treatment
techniques to keep you moving forward. Sometimes getting over a long term back problem can take many months so it is important you are heading in the right direction and have a good understanding of what is happening.

Q. Why do some of my muscles, like those on one side of my body, show up as weaker in a strength test even though I have been exercising both sides the same all these years.

A. Your body is probably out of balance in such a way that the areas showing up as weak in testing are areas that are not getting an even load put on them. Wherever there is a weakness other areas of the body are being overloaded to compensate for those weaker areas.

I have regularly found that muscles diagnosed as weak by these tests are just over contracted or tight and have been for some time. Once you release them and get the blood flowing again, the muscle regains strength very quickly without having to do specific exercises just on them. However, if the muscle weakness or tightness is a result of the imbalances in the body whereby you are not able to weight bear on it properly or there is pressure on a nerve causing the weakness, these imbalances need to be dealt with properly to bring the strength back to the muscle permanently.

Exercises you do should be specifically aimed at getting rid of these imbalances as normal exercises will just continue to cause the weight to move to the wrong areas. Even though the pain might lessen due to the increase in your strength, the underlying problems won’t go away.

Q. Why did a set of exercises work to get rid of my friend's back pain but made mine feel worse? We both felt pain in the same spot.

A. Imbalances that cause back pain accumulate in different bodies at different rates. This depends on lifestyle, diet, exercise and injury history etc. Perhaps the pattern that caused your friend's pain was much simpler or less entrenched in their body than yours. Your friend's muscles were obviously more responsive than yours to the exercises; perhaps they didn't have the pain as long as you or perhaps they were more regular with doing the exercises. Alternatively perhaps your friend’s body is just more healthy and responsive than yours it is hard to know without more facts.

There could be any number of reasons but if the exercises make your pain worse then it would be wise not to do them. Rather, investigate other things that might give you relief such as the SLM Yoga workout which is designed to have you focus on your muscles and imbalances and correct them.

Q. How can I prevent getting back pain in the future?
A. Nobody can give you a guaranteed program for avoiding back pain throughout your whole life but there are some basic rules you can follow to greatly minimise the risks. Firstly you should do your best to avoid putting stress on yourself by addressing all the things I cover in my self treatment program (too many to mention here).

Secondly, be sure to have one or two deep tissue, full body massages, preferably by an accredited SLM Bodywork therapist, immediately after any accident, injury or fall you may have. Even if you just do a day or more of heavy labour like a big painting job or heavy day in the garden when it's outside your normal routine.

Most people should get fairly regular massage, around once a month would be ideal. They should see it as a form of insurance, as a way of maintaining the suppleness and balance in their muscles to help ensure at the end of their working life they are not suffering from constant aches and pains and cannot enjoy their retirement. But remember, to make the massage work best and not be too painful, a healthy lifestyle including the diet tips my program covers, need to be a part of your daily routine.

It is important to remember that back pain can start from stress or trauma to any part of the body, even the arms or legs. Although you won't feel the pain straight away this stress can be the starting point of an imbalance that, at some time in the future, sets off a back pain episode.
EXERCISES AND THEIR ROLE IN BACK PAIN.

There are so many exercise programs available these days that it can be very difficult to know which one is best suited to each individual, especially if you are trying to cope with back pain. It's easy to get the wrong set of exercise from a well meaning doctor or therapist that actually aggravates your back pain, rather than helps it.

For example I’ve often had patients with lower back pain in and around the sacrum who have been told to do walking as exercise when the cause of their problem is a rotated or titled pelvis, making walking one of the worst exercise for them.

It is important you only take exercise advice from someone who is trained to fix the problem and it should not be the basis of the treatment they are offering.

The best rule to follow when you have back pain, is only do an exercise if it makes your pain feel better in the 2 days after. Be wary at talking advice from a doctor or therapist who is unable to demonstrate an understanding of your problem by treating you 'naturally' and giving you good relief. And don’t believe anyone who tells you it will take more than a month of treatment to give you some decent relief unless your problem is primarily weakness or you have a badly tilted or rotated pelvis.

Exercises will, at best, only help you to manage your back pain in the majority of cases. You will still need to see some way of rebalancing your body and restoring length and function of the problem muscles, if you hope to get a long term solution to your pain.

As there are various types of back pain with different causes, you will ultimately require a tailored exercise program combined with the right bodywork therapy for the best results. There are not many types of exercise that are always good for all back pains. In fact one of the worst and yet most commonly prescribed is stretching and if this is a big part of the exercise program you have been given, move on now and save your money.

The problem many acute back pain sufferers face is they are too sore to exercise as it irritates them, yet they need to exercise because they are getting weaker by the day and their body is stiffening up. I tackle that problem in my self treatment program with a water workout because it takes the gravity factor away and very rarely irritates someone already in pain. By getting started with an exercise like this a person can begin to build strength before progressing to other more convenient exercises as their pain subsides.

One common problem with most back pain sufferers includes, poor circulation and it is paramount that you fix that problem before you put any real load onto your
muscles through exercise. My solution is to use exercise to ease tension from muscles and stimulate the blood flow back in, so the muscle can recover and begin to function normally before any real pressure is applied to them.

This why I find the best way to rehabilitate a chronic back condition is to start in the water and combine that with bodywork and eventually other self help exercises that can be done in between treatments. I don’t advise people to start any other exercises until their pain has settled and I am successful at getting the suppleness back into the muscles so they can handle the normal workouts.

As far as exercise is concerned, in general you will always get a better result if your diet and other lifestyle factors are good, particularly if your body is use to doing regular exercise. If a person has always led a sedentary lifestyle and never been one for sports and exercise, it's not much use giving them a complete exercise program to help them get over their back pain. Firstly they are unlikely to be motivated to do it and secondly their muscles aren't use to it so it may prove to be quite stressful on their body. For these people the simplest solution will come by way of a 'hands on' form of bodywork from someone who knows what they are doing to restore balance and suppleness to the muscles. This should produce relatively fast and lasting results.

These days it is common for most people to have done some form of exercise at some stage in their life, so a more holistic approach involving the bodywork, exercises and a healthy diet does give the best results. Probably the hardest thing for the average person to find is the good bodywork because much of what is offered these days costs a lot of money and provides very little result.
ACID/ALKALINE CHART.

Try to eat 80% alkaline foods and 20% acid. When we refer to acid food we are talking about foods that cause an acid response from the body i.e. the body produces acid to break them down, not the composition of the food itself.

ALKALINE FRUITS apples, apricots, avocados, bananas (speckled), breadfruit, cactus, cantaloupe, carob (pod only) cherries, currants, dates, figs, grapes, grapefruit, guavas, kumquats, figs, grapes, grapefruit, guavas, kumquats lemons (ripe), limes, loquats, Mangoes melons (all), nectarines, olives (sun dried), oranges, papayas, passionfruit, peaches, pears, persimmons, pineapple (fresh if ripe), pomegranates, quince, raisins, tamarind, tangerine, tomatoes.

ALKALINE VEGETABLES cabbage red and white, carrots, celery, cauliflower, chard, chicory, chives, artichokes, asparagus (ripe), bamboo shoots, beans green lima and sprouts, beets and tops, broccoli, collards, cowslip, cucumber, dandelion greens, dill, dock green, dulse (sea lettuce), egg plant, endive, garlic, horseradish (fresh), Jerusalem artichoke, kale, leek, legumes (except peanuts), lettuce, okra, onions, oyster plant, parsley, parsnip, peppers (green/ red), all potatoes, pumpkin, radish, rhubarb (oxalic acid) sauerkraut (lemons only) sorrel, soy bean extract, spinach, squash, taro (baked), turnips and tops, watercress, water chestnut.

ALKALINE DAIRY acidophilus, buttermilk, milk raw (human, cow, goat), whey, yoghurt
ALKALINE FLESH FOODS none.
ALKALINE CEREALS millet, buckwheat, corn (green first 24 hrs)
ALKALINE NUTS almonds, roasted chestnuts, fresh coconut.
ALKALINE MISCELLANEOUS agar, alfalfa products, coffee substitutes, ginger (dried unsweetened), honey, kelp, tea, unsweetened, all yeast cakes

ACID VEGETABLES artichokes, asparagus tips white, beans all dried, brussel sprouts, garbanzos, lentils, rhubarb.
SLIGHTLY ACID mushrooms (most varieties), soy beans.
ACID DAIRY PRODUCTS butter, cheese, cottage cheese, cream, ice cream, custards, milk, boiled, cooked, pasteurised, malted, dried or canned.
ACID FLESH FOODS all meat, fowl and fish, beef, shellfish.
ACID CEREALS all flour products, barley, breads, cakes, corn, cornmeal, cornflour, gelatine gravies, starch, hominy, crackers (all) doughnuts, dumplings, macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, oatmeal, rice, rye crisp.
ACID FRUITS all preserved or jellied, canned, sugared, glazed, dried, sulphured, raw with sugar, bananas if green, pickled olives.
SLIGHTLY ACID cranberries, plums, prunes and juice.
ACID MISC. all alcoholic drinks, candy and confectionary, coffee and tea, brine, 
smoke, overwork, worry, tapioca, sodawater (carbonated drinks), tobacco, sago 
(starch), drugs and aspirin, eggs esp the whites, preserved ginger jams and jellies, 
flavourings, marmalade, mayonnaise, preservatives-benzoate, sulphur, vinegar, lack 
of sleep, salt, Bottled fruit juices and soft drinks are highly acidic because they 
contain large amounts of sugar. When fruit is juiced and left for 20 or more minutes 
the sugars convert from fructose to sucrose and become very acidic. If you drink 
fresh juice you need to squeeze it yourself and drink it straight away.
SELF TREATING YOUR PAIN.

People would be amazed at just how much you can do for yourself and your back pain, often for much better results than what you would pay hundreds of dollars to a therapist for. This is largely because there are so many bad therapists out there ready to take your money with promises they cannot keep. Good people perhaps, but with inadequate training and a lack of understanding of the problem to really have a grasp on what you require.

The aim of this Bad Back Book has been to give you an insight into how you can go about fixing your own back pain. I know I have placed a heavy emphasis on the ‘hands on’ muscle work and also pointed out the fact that finding a good therapist to do this can be difficult. I realise that might be a source of frustration for many of you and in fact it was the primary motivation for me putting my self treatment for back pain and sciatica program together.

I believe the best person to manage your recovery from back pain is you because you are the one who has the most to gain from it happening. I also believe that anyone with the right guidance and a little bit of common sense can learn to take their own pain away, perhaps with a little help from some deep tissue massage which thankfully is pretty easy to find in most places.

The thing I know my patients like so much about the way I work is that, as I treat them, I teach them what I am doing and how to look after their own back after it is fixed. Before long they can competently take away most aches or pains that crop up, without having to always run to me for help.

Now some people might think this is bad for business because I am losing work but the truth is I have never been busier and I know that is because people are happy to tell any pain sufferer they come across about me. Most people want to come in after getting a glowing recommendation from their friend because they know I will help them in the shortest possible time at the least expense, just as I did for their friend.

Even by giving this Bad Back Book away for free I know I will miss out on some work but I also get a lot of work from it because by reading it people can see the logic in my approach and often no one has ever properly explained things to them like this before.

The follow on from this book for people who are not living close enough to see me is my self treatment program. It works well because it contains everything about what I do except the hands on work, and is what I use to fix myself whenever I get a problem.
There are millions of back pain sufferers in this world but only very few therapists who are really good at fixing the problem, so having a way where people can treat themselves make perfect sense to me.

Half the time it is just getting a clear diagnosis that people want. There can be so much conflicting information given when you do the rounds with back pain, you end up more confused than when you started and that can cost you a lot of wasted money. I am very passionate about people helping themselves because it is such a cost effective way of diagnosing and treating the problem. At the cost of just a couple of massages it is far and away the best value for money available, even if just to clear up the confusion and provide much needed direction.

The program itself is quite straightforward and very simple to follow and as you would expect it expands on everything I have touched on in this book but in a practical way.

By taking a holistic approach I have included everything you need to consider and do to get your body back into a healthy condition and put balance back into the muscle system with detailed explanations and clear demonstrations. I believe that is the only sure way to really take away your pain.

The complete program includes:

1. A comprehensive look at all the lifestyle factors that determine if your body is healthy or not and what exactly you need to do to improve the health and condition of your muscles.

2. A clear explanation of how to diagnose the cause of your back problem including whether your body is strong, weak, tight, stressed, healthy or not or any combination of these.

3. A detailed demonstration of over 14 different exercises and self treatment techniques that you can use as part of your daily program or for instant relief. These will enable you to determine which muscles you need to target and how to work on them using a tennis or solid rubber ball, plus some great tools, plus other unique exercises to get them functional again.

4. A much better understanding of what the therapist you are going to see needs to do to assist you in getting pain free again.

5. A daily exercise and self treatment program you can follow for each of the different back problems that you can get.
6. A 70 minute meditative workout I call SLM Yoga. This exercise routine, which you can do at home in front of TV without any huffing and puffing, will help you loosen and balance your body making you feel like you have just had a thorough full body massage. This is very close to a real massage on yourself and you will be amazed at how effective it is compared to stretching, for making you feel loose and balanced.

7. Access to a private area in the back pain forum where you can ask me questions about anything you are not clear on or even have me analyse a photo of your back to help assist your diagnosis and speed up your progress.

8. And probably the best thing of all, you will get access to 16 online videos that run for about 30 minutes each and cover all the practical parts of self treatment including demonstrations on how you do all the exercises. The videos explain all the content of the book plus more for people who would prefer to watch a video rather than read it in a book. There is also a list of resources that will support you during your self treatment working on things like detoxing, diet, stress relief etc and more will constantly be added as I come across them.

9. You also get an instant download of the yoga dvd and book plus an MP3 version of all the videos I’ve done so you can listen to the information on the go if you are too busy.

Imagine in just a few days from now,

- You could have diagnosed exactly what your problem is.
- You will have started the daily self treatment program selecting the exercises that will work best for your unique problem.
- You are already well on the way to being pain free and in the process of making your body more balanced and stronger to keep it pain free.

When I put this program together I included everything I had learnt originally and discovered during nearly 20 years of treating every conceivable back problem you could imagine.

Following that I tried it out on a number of my patients to make sure it worked and then as a result of their feedback, made changes that I thought would make it more effective and easier to follow. I am still adding anything I think of that will help via bonus links on the video program pages plus entries in the private members area to ensure you are constantly up to date with whatever I think can assist you to get better.
I am not saying this program will be the ultimate solution for all back pain and sciatica sufferers as that would be impossible. But it will show you exactly how to get your body into the best possible condition to recover and by doing that you will improve to a large extent without doubt. Even if you have structural problems and have been told there is nothing that can be done for you.

Nothing in the program should aggravate your pain if you follow the instructions given and if it does you simply stop that exercise immediately and concentrate on the ones that improve your condition. Of course if you do have any doubts or questions you can always contact me for a fast answer via the private forum.

I have had some great feedback from people who are doing the program, for example:

Hi Steve,
I want to say to you, that I am most impressed with your SLM system. In place of a SLM therapist here in Toronto, which I would happily visit once a month for tuneups, I've had good success with a shiatsu therapist, along with faithful adherence to SLM bodywork. Your two books and the DVD are exactly where it's at for my back and sciatica problems. They present the needed solutions, not understood in my experience with two medical doctor and three chiropractor visitations over a period of years. Your theories and knowledge of how muscles work, and how to cater to their needs for long-term relief of my pain has, to say the least, been most gratifying. Had you been available with your SLM system forty years ago ( I'm 74 now ), I'm confident that my pain-free years would have been increased by 40. Again, thanks Steve for the results of your successful efforts in the art of bodyworkings.
Ron Dutcher, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Hi Steve.
Yes, its been 4 weeks (at the time of this email) since I started your program. I've been really impressed! After 4 weeks of following your advice, I'm at the stage where I am back to around 95% recovered. Some minor pain occasionally but I still working on getting rid of that!
I previously had the same disc bulge injury some 9 months ago & did lots of intense physio to fix the problem. This took 4 months before I was at the stage where I am now.I would highly recommend your book & advice to anyone with any sort of back problem.
Regards
Tony Staska, Australia.

Hi Steve
I have found that your program makes perfect sense and have done a little
with results felt immediately. My knees and hips no longer give so much pain when I walk. A little stiffness near the end of my hour of walking instead of constant pain. I still have a shoulder problem that has been giving me problems for over a year and many visits to chiropractors has done nothing to help. Now that I have sold my business I intend to spend some time getting myself back in shape using your program. I have lost 8kgs by walking and improving my diet and I have been able to avoid blood pressure medication by getting my blood pressure down. I will send a picture etc when I come back from my Easter break to Mildura. I am going to try to see one of your therapists as well.

Kind regards
Maureen Pannach Australia.

FOR DOZENS MORE TESTIMONIES CLICK HERE

There is always a good reason why people have back pain and fixing it is just a process I explain clearly in my self treatment program. Believe me, all is not always as you are led to believe, because many specialists over complicate back pain far too much and in doing so miss the obvious.

I am sure there are people reading this who have been led to believe their case is so bad they are beyond help of this nature. People who have been taking medication for many years for nerve pain that just doesn’t let up or perhaps can’t work due to their back pain.

I would not exclude them from being able to improve their condition using the same approach, I’ve seen it happen many times. It is all about getting the body healthier, stronger more balanced. When you do that any back condition, along with many other symptoms, will improve and I am prepared to guarantee that with the 60 day money back offer I include with every program I sell.

The important thing is just to put everything in the right order. Obviously when you are in a very bad way you can’t jump straight into doing just any exercises or you will just irritate your pain. First up you need to settle the inflamed tissue down and build some strength into your body using specific parts of the program that won’t cause irritation.

Check this list and tick off everything you have tried so far and see what’s left.

Medication, (not good for you long term.)
Cortisone, (not good for you, period.)
Facet joint injections, (not good for you and so painful,)
Surgery, (can be necessary in some cases but should be last resort,)
Physiotherapy,
Osteopathy,
Chiropractic,
Acupuncture,
Stretches,
Exercises,
Rest,
Massage,
Energy healing
Vitamins or Herbs,
Counselling,
And what else???

If you have pretty much been through this list, ask yourself did anyone put together a program involving diet, deep tissue treatment on your muscles, very specific exercises and lifestyle issues that covered posture, weight loss and maintenance through self treatment? If not then you haven’t seen an SLM therapist and where at all possible that is probably the next thing you should do.

If this is not possible because of your finances or where you live, then the self treatment program will allow you to undertake the same course of treatment under your own steam or combine it with a different style of therapy that you do have access to.

No doubt you must be frustrated when you are reading this. You must be asking yourself “How do I do it?”

“How do I determine what type of body I have, where the underlying cause my back condition is and what can I do to take the pain away as quickly as possible so it stays away?”

If you are asking these questions you are well on your way, for the purpose of this book is not to answer these questions but to raise them, not how to do it but what needs to be done. Unless you really desire an end to your pain. Unless you understand what needs to be done. Unless you understand the essential importance of taking a holistic full body approach for your recovery and that with the right approach nearly all back pain and sciatica is fixable without months of physiotherapy, chiropractic adjustments or invasive surgery, all the ‘how to do it’ in the world won’t make a bit of difference to you.
And finally, the actual steps you need to take to begin the healing process and start to see results for the effort you put in is waiting for you right here

I look forward to seeing you there and wish you the very best of luck and good health.

Steve Lockhart

P.S. If the information in this book has inspired you to consider a career helping people with pain you can find out all about my SLM Bodywork course by clicking here.

Other more general information about SLM Bodywork is located here

© S.J.Lockhart Pty Ltd. 2007 All Rights Reserved.