

The Tuesday Minute

Nutritional information.... one byte at a time

This Week's Topic

Simple Fix . . . Profound Changes

I always try to be a compassionate person; but I have a confession, I was the guy who didn't understand complaints from people with back pain until it happened to me.

Maybe you're the same way. I didn't realize how serious it was. I would kind of "roll my eyes" slightly, or think "back pain? C'mon, toughen up." Then one day without warning, I over-extended my back. Wow. The pain was very real. Now I understand, and I have great compassion for people with back pain.

The pain can be crippling. As a matter of fact almost 80% of all Americans will experience back pain in their lives. Over 1 million people are disabled by back pain. It's a big deal. Since my experience, I've taken a "personal interest" in effective ways to relieve back pain. If I read or hear a doctor's clinical advice about nutritional approaches to back pain, I really pay attention. As a result, I'd like to share a simple fix that can have profound changes in lower back pain and strength.

Let me repeat my statement, "a simple fix that can have profound changes". Let me say right up front that this is not going to help everybody, but it has such a profound payoff and is so inexpensive it is worth considering with everyone who has chronic back problems.

This clinical pearl comes from Dr. Dan Duffy. First let's think about the intricacy of the spinal nerves and muscles. Each vertebra has different opposing muscles surrounding it to keep the individu-

al vertebrae in place. The body in its inherent wisdom knows that if the vertebra is extended too far, it will cause pressure on the nerve and pain will result.

When the vertebrae or spinous process moves too far, one of the muscles in the back tightens to keep the vertebrae in place which assures we don't over extend and cause pressure on the nerve. This is a good thing and keeps us from injuring ourselves.

What is so amazing to me is that the very cells have memory; and if there has been a history of overextension, the muscles in that section of the back are quick to compensate or protect the nerve. Another thing the body does in its wisdom is if one of the muscle pairs become weak or flaccid, the opposing muscle will tighten down a little to protect the body from overextending.

In my mind I have this picture of a stick with 2 rubber bands, one on each side, which keeps the stick within certain boundaries. If one of the rubber bands gets soft or flaccid, the other rubber band tightens up a notch to keep the stick in its place. Kind a crude analogy, but it is a good word picture.

This protective mechanism will compensate or "contract" and actually tighten the muscle if chronic overextension or flaccid opposing muscles exist. The overcompensation is what we call a muscle spasm.

If you have never experienced severe back pain, you may say "only a little back spasm"; but muscle

spasms can feel like a vice on your vertebrae locking your spinous process again to protect it.

Using nutritional therapies: we have tried all kinds of herbs like passiflower, valerian, or hops to relax the muscles. Minerals like calcium, and magnesium have also been used for the same effect. Literally for years, that has been my approach. Before I get too tough on myself, let's not forget this is still the main line medical therapy.

Prescription muscle relaxers have been used for decades to break the spasm cycle. Here's what Dr. Duffy taught me. And if we are to be exact, Dr. George Goodheart probably taught him. Everybody is concerned about relaxing the muscle; the question is, why is the muscle tight in the first place?

One of the main reasons for the spasm is because the opposing muscle is weak or flaccid. How can we strengthen the weak muscle? If we strengthen the weak muscle, Dr. Duffy told us the overcompensating tight muscle would relax and return to its normal function. To me this was like a bolt of lightning. Fix the problem, and then the body's compensatory or protective mechanism will shut off on its own.

As you know, back pain has multiple causes from physical abuse to emotional overload. One common factor that causes back pain is some form of stress. Stress burns out your B vitamins as well as vitamin C. B vitamins are necessary for the Krebs cycle to work properly.

The Krebs cycle is responsible for converting glucose to a usable form of energy called ATP. ATP can be used by the muscle cells to increase strength. Dr. Duffy shared that by providing small amounts of B vitamins every hour in a bio-

available form, the weak or flaccid muscle would get strong.

Here's the clinical pearl. The muscle in spasm would relax. Biotics makes a product called Bio-B 100 that supplies B vitamins in their active phosphorylated form. 3 tablets provide 100 % of the RDA. Phosphorylated B vitamins are used to make sure that the body can use them without having to convert them into their usable form. The dosage for back pain is 2 tablets of Bio-B 100 every waking hour for 10 days; then, maintain a dosage of 3 tablets three times per day.

Of course we use the proteolytic enzyme formula Intenzyme Forte to reduce inflammation and use chondroprotective agents like Chondro-Plus. I have put together a patient education CD called "Joint Care and Repair" that you can request on the web page regarding diets and why your patients should take supplements from you rather than getting them from discount sources.

In closing, I think you'll find Dr. Duffy's approach for strengthening weak muscles useful with many of your patients. Give it a try. Low potency B vitamins are inexpensive enough that you can add it to every low back protocol. Even if it doesn't make that profound of a change, you can be assured Bio-B 100 will support adrenals and support Krebs cycle function.

Thanks for taking the time to read this week's edition, and thanks to so many of you for encouraging us with your comments.

I'll see you next week for another Tuesday Minute.