**LUMBAR RADICULOPATHY AND/OR MECHANICAL LOW BACK PAIN**

Lumbar radiculopathy is a condition in which a pinched nerve in the lumbar spine causes pain and/or numbness or tingling to radiate down the lower extremity.

Mechanical low back pain is a condition often caused by degeneration of the vertebral discs in the lumbar spine. This type of pain can radiate into the hip region, generally in the gluteal or buttock region.

Symptoms that Warrant Urgent Treatment:

Some symptoms that occur in association with low back pain and/or radicular pain are concerning and require emergent treatment. If you experience any of the following symptoms we recommend you go to the Emergency Room right away for further evaluation and treatment. If you have some of these symptoms you may require urgent surgical intervention by a spine surgeon.

1. Loss of bowel or bladder function
2. Progressive weakness
3. Severe or uncontrollable pain

Medical Treatment:

 Non-narcotic pain medications (if tolerated, not allergic to, or contraindicated) are usually helpful. Two over the counter Aleve (220 mg tablets) twice a day or ibuprofen (Motrin) 600-800mg three times a day may be taken with food or milk. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 1000mg three times per day can be taken in addition to naproxen OR ibuprofen.

 If you are taking naproxen or ibuprofen regularly, check with your medical doctor as they may have side effects such as increased blood pressure or lead to the development of a gastric ulcer. Your primary care doctor can help you in managing the amount of non-narcotic medications you should be using and how often.

Conservative Treatment:

There are several types of mechanical treatments that can help including physical therapy, chiropractic care, tilt table, weight loss and a home exercise program.

Chiropractic care is treatment modality that can sometimes help with symptomatic care of mechanical low back pain referred to the hip region and lumbar radiculopathy. Chiropractic care involves manipulation of the lumbar spine by a chiropractor to bring the spine into proper alignment. If you feel this would be beneficial to you, you can contact a chiropractor in your area for an appointment.

A short course of supervised physical therapy with instruction and eventual transition to a home exercise program is often also beneficial. The physical therapist will often focus on hamstring stretching and core strengthening exercises. The home exercise program needs to be incorporated into your daily routine several times per week to keep symptoms at bay. Again if you would like to try physical therapy you can contact a physical therapist in your area and we can get a referral started for you with a physical therapy prescription. A typical prescription that is given to patients is as follows:

Dx: Mechcanical low back pain and/or lumbar radiculopathy

Rx: PT Eval and Treat 1-2 visits per week for 3-4 weeks

 Develop a care of the back program

The application of heat and/or ice to the low back may provide symptomatic relief as well.

Some patients may benefit from injection therapy in which a steroid is injection into the spine where the nerves are irritated. If you’d like a referral to a non-operative back specialist to determine whether a steroid injection would be of benefit to you we’d be happy to set up an appointment for you.

Additional Resources:

If you are having difficulty at work due to your low back and/or lower extremity pain, you may want to contact an occupational medicine doctor to help with work management. Below are two local occupational medicine doctors that you can contact for work management issues.

Dr. Larry Studt – Occupational Medicine – Work Management

Prevea Health

703 W. Hamilton Ave.

Eau Claire, WI 54701

715-717-4944

Dr. Joseph Hebl – Occupational Medicine – Work Management

First Choice Occupational Medicine and Disability

623 E. Clairemont

Eau Claire, WI 54701

715-834-3164