



CAPTA NEWS

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Degenerative Disc Disease & Effects of Smoking

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Do you suffer from chronic low back pain? Do you currently smoke, or have a history of smoking? If you answered yes to these questions, you may want to think again the next time you go to light up.

Your intervertebral discs are flat, round “jelly doughnut-like” cushions found between the bones (vertebrae) in your spine and serve as your spine’s shock absorbing system. They make up about one-third of your overall spinal column length and help to protect your vertebrae, spinal cord, brain and nerves. The discs soak up nutrient rich fluid as your body and back are at rest. However, this process can become inhibited through repetitive motion (bending, lifting and twisting), injury, poor posture, diet and most importantly **smoking**.

Smoking, more specifically, the chemical composition of the active ingredients in cigarettes and cigars (nicotine and toxins), not only speeds up the processes, which make the discs lose height, mass and diameter, but also leads to dehydration of the disc anatomy. When the amount of water in your discs decreases from smoking, they become thinner and more prone to injury, such as slipping, bulging or herniation. Furthermore, smoking raises the carbon monoxide content of your blood and can lead to long-term effects on cellular health. Thus, it is common for smokers to suffer worse back symptoms than non-smokers and you may find it harder to find relief from your back pain even when using appropriate therapy options.

So, if you have contemplated quitting, and have back pain now is a good time to start. Quit now and at least you know that from this day forward you have started on the right path to protect your health and your back.

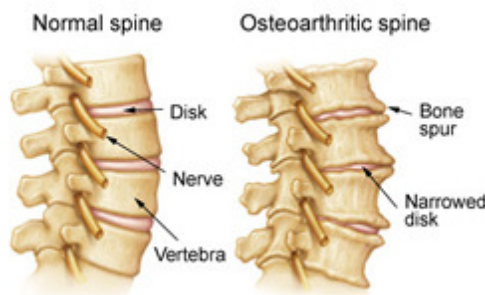


Diagram of a normal spine with healthy discs vs. an arthritic spine with unhealthy discs.

