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## **Overweight? Your Extra Pounds and the link to Back Pain.**

All across North America, poor food choices and sedentary lifestyles are wreaking havoc on our middles. Obesity has tripled in the past 20 years, with adults and kids feeling the effects of convenience meals coupled with low levels of exercise. At the same time, back pain complaints have doubled. Our backs are paying the price for the extra weight we are carrying.

The latest research indicates that additional weight adds a significant load for your spine, putting stress and pressure on the cushioning around your vertebrae. In addition, belly fat sends out inflammatory chemicals that weaken discs. For people managing obesity, the result is chronic lower back pain.

In a new study from Hong Kong, scans of over 2,500 women and men revealed that piling on pounds increases the risk for degenerative disc disease (DDD) by 30% to 79%. DDD puts additional pressure on nerves causing spine-tingling numbness and often resulting in ruptured or slipped discs. Sadly, one in 10 people with DDD ends up needing back surgery.

To manage the effects of back pain, many of us reach for an ibuprofen to manage back pain. There is an alternative. Staying in shape helps prevent serious damage to your backbone discs, keeping your spine flexible with less strain on your spine's natural shock absorbers.

Here are some of my tips to stay in shape:

- **Get Moving!** As I've mentioned in earlier articles, parking your car further away in the parking lot adds up extra calories being burnt. Try a new sport and add some core strengthening exercises into your routine to build the right kind of muscles.
- **Take Breaks.** Reducing back soreness can be as simple as getting up and moving around regularly. To improve back conditioning, a balanced set of exercises should include a combination of stretching, strengthening, and aerobic conditioning.
- **Stop the Slouch.** When sitting, keep your shoulders in line with your hips and your feet flat on the floor. Keeping your knees bent and supported at 90 degrees can also make a difference to back pain.

In my experience, small steps can make a difference. Set yourself a small goal to walk a little further and be more active today - your back and your middle will thank you for it.