

[IMAGE]

Pain Pills Don't Go Away After Back Surgery

By Editorial Staff

We can debate the necessity of spine surgery until the proverbial cows come home, but a few concerning realities are becoming apparent: it's performed far too frequently and it doesn't mean your pain will go away. In terms of the latter point, a recent study in the peer-reviewed journal *Pain* found that patients who took prescription opioid pain meds before undergoing lumbar (lower back) fusion surgery were overwhelmingly likely to continue opioid use long term following surgery.

Among nearly 2,500 adult patients who underwent fusion surgery, almost half used opioids long term (at least four prescriptions filled in seven months) prior to surgery. Among those presurgical users, a whopping 77 percent continued use long term following surgery, while 14 percent continued use on a periodic basis. Only 9 percent discontinued opioid use or used them postsurgically for only a short period of time. Of the 77 percent who continued long-term use, 45 percent actually had their dosage increased following surgery. And to top it all off, 13 percent of patients who did not use opioids before surgery became long-term users after the procedure.

pain relief - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark So, is spine surgery failing to take away the pain, or is opioid use a hard habit to break? Both probably deserve equal blame. That's why nondrug, nonsurgical options – such as chiropractic care – for back pain are landing front and center in the health care conversation. If you're experiencing back pain, schedule a visit with a doctor of chiropractic as your first provider choice. Why? Because research suggests back pain patients who see a chiropractor first are far less likely to undergo spine surgery compared to patients whose first contact is with a spine surgeon. Less chance of surgery, less chance of addictive pain medication; now that's a win-win for your health.

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