

[IMAGE]

## 18 Wheels, 23 Discs

Truckers and others who drive for a living report more back problems than those working in any other occupation. Scientists have theorized that constant, long-term "whole-body vibration" caused by driving accelerates degeneration and herniation of the body's 23 spinal discs, leading to lower-back pain and disability.

Researchers compared 45 pairs of identical male twins who had distinctly different driving patterns throughout their lives, in which one twin had spent a lot of time driving occupationally, and the other had not. The amount of spinal disc degeneration each man suffered was determined based on readings from magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Twins were studied because in the absence of outside factors that affect spinal degeneration, a set of twins' spines should appear fairly similar at any given point in time.

Driving time did not appear to affect spinal disc degeneration; men who drove multiple hours daily for many years were no more likely to have significant disc degeneration than their twins who did not. No other spinal disorders appeared more common in professional drivers, either, in this study appearing in *The Lancet*.

This is good news if you drive an 18-wheeler: Your spine may not suffer permanent damage from long hours on the road. Yet the fact remains that back pain is common in drivers. Whether the pain is caused by muscle fatigue or damage, nerve changes at the cellular level or some other factor, your doctor of chiropractic can help prevent it.

### *Reference:*

Battié MC, Videman T, et al. Occupational driving and lumbar disc degeneration: A case-control study. *The Lancet* 2002;360(9343), pp. 1369-1374.

For more information on back pain, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/backpain.html>

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