

Lower Back and Knee Pain (Why it's worse in the Winter)

Did you ever wonder why so many aches and pains get worse in the winter, especially your lower back and knee? Several factors influence this but it's mainly the various types of stress that increase in the winter months. That's not to say that your pains are emotional in nature, indeed stress creates a physiological affect on your body, which leads to structural deviations and misalignments.

We all have two adrenal glands that sit on top of the kidneys. They have several functions, the main one is to produce adrenalin, which gives us energy. Fatigue is such a common complaint and anything that weakens the adrenals will create or worsen your fatigue. The adrenals also produce anti-inflammatories referred to as cortico-steroids. They actually produce cortisol, which is the equivalent of cortisone, a common steroid taken for severe inflammatory pain. The cortisol that your body produces has no side effects, the medication cortisone (commonly referred to as prednizone) has severe side effects. The adrenals also have a huge effect in controlling blood sugar levels and typically hypoglycemia or low blood sugar will develop from having exhausted adrenals. This creates hunger, fatigue, light-headedness, headaches and mood swings.

The adrenals are weakened by emotional or chemical stress. In the winter when we have less light and less outdoor time it is perceived as a stress. Some people experience a severe form of this referred to as SAD (seasonal affective disorder), many experience a mild form of this and don't even realize it. The cold of the winter is also a stress to the adrenals as well as leaving the house early in the morning while it is still dark and coming home in the dark. Of course there is the emotional stress of preparing for the holidays, having family stay with you, and the sense of loss for our deceased loved ones amplified during holidays.

More so than emotional stress is the chemical stress we are exposed to in the winter. The delicious melons, plums, peaches, etc., are gone in which we get so many anti-oxidants and phyto-nutrients. We replace this rich nutrient food with junk food. When it's dark early, we're home early, watching more television and eating more snacks. Winter snacks are generally full of partially hydrogenated oils which are bad for your heart and cholesterol levels and they generate free radicals in your body. This is an immediate stressor to your adrenals. They will be affected within 20 minutes of ingesting these foods. Hydrogenated oils are found in cookies, chips, chocolates, and many other snacks. Avoid snacks with preservatives and artificial flavors and colors. There are tons of snacks and cookies and sweets in the health food stores that taste good, will satisfy a sweet tooth and probably will not weaken your adrenals. Ask for help in the store, most people working in these stores know what tastes good and can offer many suggestions for those trying to eat healthier.

Another big thing we do when it's cold out is to want to drink something hot. The number one choice is coffee, which is a major stressor to the body. It leaches minerals out, weakens the adrenals by increasing the production of stress hormones, elevates blood pressure and creates spasms of muscles in certain people. It is probably one of the most irritating substances to those suffering from joint or arthritis pain and over the years will weaken your plumbing (arteries and veins). Weak arteries leads to heart attacks and strokes.

So how does all of this stress actually create lower back and knee pain. When the adrenals are weakened there is a reflex called the visceral-somatic reflex meaning organ-muscle reflex. When an organ is stressed or weakened a specific muscle will be weakened. The function of a muscle is to hold and maintain the structure in alignment. When the adrenals are weakened two muscles in particular are affected. They are called the gracillus and sartorius. The sartorius starts from the front of your pelvis, crosses your mid thigh and attaches to the inner knee. When this muscle goes weak it allows the pelvis to rotate backwards creating a sacro-iliac misalignment, and on the other end the inner knee loses structural support, which will create inflammation of the knee. You can't get your lower back or knee better until you fix your adrenals. Even if you have a true disc condition the pain will be significantly worse when your adrenals are weak.

To fix the adrenals one must stop ingesting those substances that weaken the adrenals and take nutritional support to rejuvenate this organ. Everybody is different and through kinesiology testing it can be determined what nutrients your body will respond to. The least you can do is to reduce your coffee intake, get rid of the hydrogenated oils, and try to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Silverman is a chiropractor and state certified nutritionist who has been in practice for 23 years. He has taught college level courses in holistic health and nutrition and has appeared on many TV and radio shows including the Gary Null show and News 12. He has lectured and consulted for several homeopathic and nutritional companies and has two offices, one in Hauppauge (631) 724-6780 and one in Roslyn (516) 484-0776.)