

## Does Your Back Ache? By Leena Kamat, MD.

Back pain is one of the most common reasons people go to the doctor or miss work. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, back pain is the primary cause of job-related disability. At least 80 percent of Americans will experience back pain in their lifetimes. Symptoms include muscle ache, shooting or stabbing pain, pain that radiates down the leg or limited flexibility or range of motion.

Most back pain is the result of an injury, such as muscle strain due to sudden movements or poor body mechanics while lifting heavy objects. Back pain can also be the result of certain diseases, such as cancer of the spinal cord, a ruptured or herniated disc, sciatica, arthritis, or infections of the spine. Acute back pain can last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, while chronic back pain is pain that lasts longer than three months.

Radiological imaging may help in establishing a cause for a patient's back pain. Imaging options include plain radiographs, CT, MRI, or nuclear medicine bone scan. Conventional radiographs of the spine can help excluding neoplasm, infection, or ankylosing spondylitis. CT and MRI are cross-sectional imaging and the method of choice in diagnosing spinal stenosis, herniated discs and facet joint abnormalities.

Studies have shown that uncomplicated back pain is a benign self-limited condition that does not warrant imaging. For cases that would be considered complicated status and may warrant imaging would include the following red flags: recent trauma, unexplained weight loss, unexplained fever, immunosuppression, history of cancer, IV drug use, prolonged use of corticosteroids, osteoporosis, age >70, focal neurologic deficit progressive or disabling symptoms, and duration greater than 6 weeks. Generally, the complexity and severity of a patient's clinical condition should dictate the selection of appropriate imaging procedures or treatments.

Radiology Specialists of Florida offers musculoskeletal, neurological, and nuclear medicine imaging that can help assist in diagnosing and/or treating causes of back pain. We keep up to date on the latest technology and information. The Florida Hospital Care Network allows us to collaborate on patient care and deliver seamless, connected healthcare services for all ages.

Leena Kamat, MD, is a board certified diagnostic radiologist, sub-specialized in breast imaging for Radiology Specialists of Florida. She earned her medical degree at the University of Florida, College of Medicine and following graduation completed her residency at the University of South Florida and a fellowship in breast imaging at the Moffitt Cancer Center. In her spare time, Dr. Kamat enjoys spending time with her family and friends, travel, fitness, and cooking.