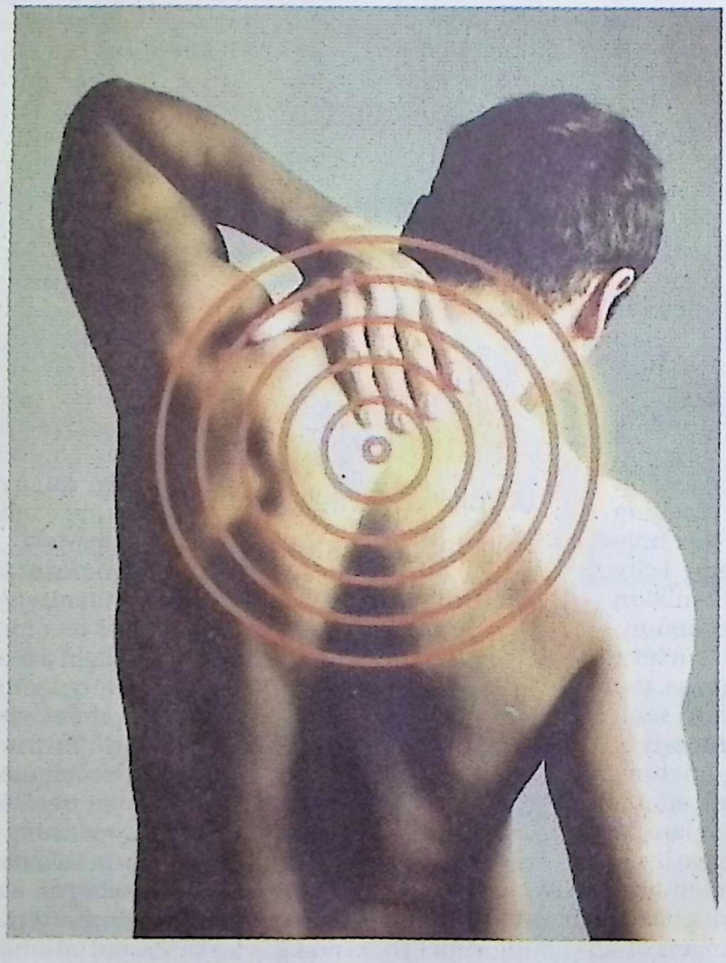
Dealing with Back Pain

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I can bet almost all of you know have a close family member or a friend who suffers from back pain. One can appreciate the debilitating nature of back pain only when they have experienced it themselves. Simple tasks like walking, sitting or even sleeping becomes uncomfortable and very painful when one gets back pain.

Back pain, surprisingly, is very common. Four out of five of us will suffer from back pain at some point in our lives. Although back pain may be temporary, it is one of the commonest causes of visits to a doctor and absence from the workplace in the western world. The Canadian economy lost a staggering 16.4 billion dollars due to lost productivity and treatment of back pain in 2003! This is only one example; countries like the UK and US have similar statistics. If an audit was done in Bangladesh, I am pretty sure back pain would be one of the major health related causes for loss of productivity in our economy too.

But before I make you panic, let me assure you back pain is a treatable condition and can be easily tackled with home remedies and good body mechanics.

The back is prone to frequent injuries as it bears a large proportion of our body weight. Any awkward stress, such as carrying a very heavy object or making an uncomfortable trunk movement, can injure the back and trigger back pain.

Most backaches are due to musculoskeletal pain, and resolves in a matter of days. However, if you find that your back pain has been persisting for weeks or months, be careful of a few sinister conditions that may be triggering it off. These include trauma to the back, a 'herniated disc' (there is injury to one or more vertebral bones of the back), 'sciatica' (a nerve arising from the vertebra is compressed, which causes pain), 'spinal stenosis' (in which the outlet of a nerve from the vertebra gets pinched) or 'spondylosis' (weakening of the bones of our back due to age).

A word of warning here: if you find that you have symptoms such as leg weakness or loss of sensation in your legs along with back pain, or worsening back pain with weight loss, then it is extremely important for you to seek help from an orthopaedic surgeon immediately. If you have severe back pain and a fever at the same time, you may have an infection, so get it checked to prevent it from getting any worse.

If you have back pain, a wide variety of treatments are available to help you get relief. Medical studies have shown that exercising your back is more effective in relieving back pain than bed rest, so no excuses for being lazy.

The first step in treating back pain is physical therapy and exercise. This includes simple exercises like twisting your trunk clockwise and anticlockwise, improving your flexibility, getting a back massage to relieve the stress off your back muscles and improving posture. We will be running a series