Know Your Joints

Muscle and Joint Care Suggestions

Why do cyclists get low back pain?

Summary: Cycling is exhilarating, but the hunched-over position can strain the back, leading to back pain in over 50% of cyclists. Research emphasizes preventive measures like proper bike fit and core strength. Factors like riding posture and weekly cycling distance also play a role. Avid cyclists may face a higher incidence of back issues, but individual variability exists. To enhance the cycling experience, staying attuned to one's body and incorporating preventive measures are crucial, including addressing specific factors like poor bike fit, inadequate knee bend, and weak core muscles as well as incorporating frequent breaks.

Cycling is invigorating, but prolonged flexed positions may strain the back, prompting questions about whether avid cyclists face more back issues. Research underscores the role of proper bike fit, core strength, and breaks to prevent injuries. Despite a relatively low injury rate in cycling, over 50% of cyclists report low back pain, necessitating attention. A 2010 article emphasizes addressing lower back pain and anterior knee pain in competitive cyclists to prevent overuse injuries. It highlights the need for ongoing attention to back health in the cycling community. Incorporating preventive measures, such as proper bike fit, core strengthening, flexibility training, breaks from the flexed position, and seeking professional guidance, is crucial for a more enjoyable and sustainable cycling experience.

Why cyclists get low back pain:

- Poor Bike Fit: Incorrect saddle height or an uneven saddle can contribute to back pain.
- Inadequate Knee Bend: Less than 25% bend at the end of the stroke can force cyclists to rock their pelvis, stressing low back muscles.
- Improper Handlebar Position: Handlebars too far forward can lead to overstretching of the low back.
- Excessive Hip Flexion: Too much hip flexion can flex the lower back, hindering the efficiency of core abdominal muscles.
- Back Posture: The hunched-over position strains the lower back, especially during prolonged rides.
- Low Cadence: Using big gears at a slow cadence puts extra stress on back muscles.
- Hamstring Length: Insufficient length of hamstrings can pull on the pelvis, rotating the spine into flexion.
- Weak Core Muscles: Inadequate core strength increases stress on the lower back.
- Neck and Upper Back Strain: The position on the bicycle, especially with aerodynamic bars, can strain the neck and upper back.
- Bumpy Terrain: Uneven surfaces increase jarring and spinal compression, contributing to back pain.
- Weekly Cycling Length: Studies suggest a correlation between self-reported weekly kilometers cycled and lower back pain, with those covering 160 km or more per week being significantly more prone to reporting back pain.

Addressing these factors through awareness, proper training, and professional guidance can significantly reduce the risk of back pain in cyclists.