

Concerned About Your X-ray or MRI Findings?

Prevent yourself from becoming a VOMIT (Victim Of Medical Imaging Technology)

Medical imaging procedures such as x-rays, ultrasounds, CT Scans and MRIs can be very valuable for identifying serious medical conditions such as fractures, dislocations, spinal cord injuries, etc. However, once "serious" problems have been ruled out by a doctor, minor findings are of no value in helping to explain the far majority of aches and pains. In fact, not only are the majority of imaging results not helpful, studies support that they are even harmful from a psychological point of view. Especially when reports tell patients that they have *arthritis, degenerative discs, disc bulges, tendon tears, etc.* Everyday thousands of patients across Canada become a VOMIT (Victim Of Medical Imaging Technology). Those who become a VOMIT have been shown to have more doctor's visits, longer lasting pain, more disability, and a lower sense of well being.^{1,2,3}

Here are a few important facts regarding medical imaging that you must be aware of to prevent yourself from becoming another VOMIT.

Lumbar Spine

Studies have shown that lumbar disc degeneration is present in 40% of individuals under the age of 30 and present in over 90% of those between the ages of 50-55.⁸

Another study showed that amongst healthy young adults aged 20-22 years with no back pain, 48% had at least one degenerated disc, and 25% had a bulging disc.⁹

Leading physicians at the department of Neurosurgery at the University of California strongly recommend AGAINST the routine use of MRI for low back pain since they have found NO LINK between degenerative changes seen on x-rays or MRIs and low back pain.¹⁰

Translation: Do not panic if your x-ray or MRI shows "problems" with your discs; they are simply NORMAL changes that happen from the age of 20 onwards.

Hip

There is only a weak association between joint space narrowing seen on hip x-rays and actual symptoms.¹¹

In fact, one study showed that 77% of healthy hockey players who had no pain, had hip and groin abnormalities on their MRIs.¹²

Translation: Do not panic if your hip x-ray or MRI shows cartilage tears or narrowing; it is NOT a sign of permanent pain or disability.

Knee

Studies have shown that when x-rayed, up to 85% of adults with no actual knee pain have x-rays that show knee arthritis. This means that there is little correlation between the degree of arthritis seen on x-ray, and actual pain.¹³

In fact, one study showed that 48% of healthy professional basketball players had meniscal (cartilage) "damage" on their knee MRIs.¹⁴

Translation: Do not panic if your knee x-ray or MRI shows degeneration, arthritis or mild cartilage tears; it is NORMAL!

Thoracic Spine

MRI studies of healthy adults with no history of upper or low back pain found that 47% had disc degeneration, 53% had disc bulges and 58% had disc tears in their thoracic spine. Amazingly 29% of these healthy adults had a disc bulge that was actually deforming and pressing on the spinal cord, yet they did not even know about it.^{6,7}

Translation: Do not panic if your x-ray or MRI shows "problems" with your discs; they are simply common and NORMAL findings.

Cervical Spine

An MRI study of healthy adults and seniors found that 98% of all the men and women with no neck pain had evidence of "degenerative changes" in their cervical discs.⁴

A 10 year study compared the MRIs of healthy people to those with neck whiplash injuries. Immediately and 10 years later, both groups had similar MRIs with 3/4 having neck disc bulges.⁵

Translation: The far majority of all healthy adults get neck degeneration (arthritis) and disc bulges meaning they are a NORMAL aging process! Therefore neck arthritis or mild to moderate disc bulges cannot possibly be a reasonable explanation of your neck pain, or else 98% of people would have neck pain.

Shoulder

MRI studies of adults who have no shoulder pain show that 20% have partial rotator cuff tears and 15% have full thickness tears. In addition, in those 60 and older with no shoulder pain or injury, 50% (half) of them had rotator cuff tears on their MRI that they did not even know about.¹⁶

A study on professional baseball pitchers showed that 40% of them had either partial or full thickness rotator cuff tears yet had no pain while playing and remained pain free even 5 years after the study.¹⁷

Translation: Do not panic if your ultrasound and/or MRI shows a rotator cuff tear; it is NOT necessarily associated with shoulder pain!

Ankle

Although there is an association with plantar fasciitis and heel spurs, it should also be known that 32% of people with no foot or heel pain have a heel spur visible on x-ray.¹⁵

Translation: One third of all people have a heel spur and have no pain.

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