

## **Shoe Inserts May Relieve Low Back Pain**

NEW YORK, Mar 24 (Reuters Health) -- A majority of cases of chronic low back pain may be caused by abnormalities in gait, US researchers suggest. They report that the use of corrective shoe inserts appears to provide more effective back pain relief than standard therapies.

"It is important to recognize that patients with chronic low back pain do not limp because they hurt; rather, they hurt because they limp," according to study authors Dr. Howard Dananberg of Bedford, New Hampshire, and Dr. Michelle Guillano of Temple University Health Systems in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Their findings are published in the March issue of the Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association.

Americans suffering from chronic low back pain spend tens of billions of dollars annually in their search for relief.

Dananberg and Guillano examined the gait of 32 patients with low back pain. Each of the subjects had already received a succession of standard therapies (including spinal manipulation, physical therapy, therapeutic injections and/or surgery), yet none had produced significant pain relief.

Gait abnormalities were detected in all patients. The researchers fitted each subject with specially-designed shoe inserts meant to correct these imbalances.

As a result, "84% (27) of the 32 patients experienced improvement," according to the investigators, with relief of symptoms "demonstrated over a time period twice as long" as in previous work. Average follow-up time for participants in this study was nearly 14 months whereas the standard study follow-up is 2 to 4 months.

Patients indicated an average 66% reduction in pain symptoms, a level of relief the authors say is "nearly two times as great as that of patients treated with traditional back-pain care" in a previous study.

Dananberg and Guillano explain that gait abnormalities can result in muscle overuse and a