

The Incidence Of Back Pain In Women During Menopause: A Literature Review

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PURPOSE: Menopause may be responsible for a portion of spinal complaints in female athletes. This study investigated the incidence of back pain during perimenopause.

METHODS: A literature review was performed using PUBMED, ScienceDirect, and MEDLINE, with keywords, “menopause”, “perimenopause”, “back pain”, and “incidence”. Articles discussing “postmenopausal” or “postmenopause” were excluded.

RESULTS: 206 articles were screened and 16 articles reviewed. The incidence of back pain in perimenopausal women varied between 12.2% and 72.3%.

Several studies found that the prevalence of back pain was significantly higher in perimenopausal women compared to pre and postmenopausal women. Other studies suggested that while back pain may be higher in perimenopausal women than premenopausal women, the incidence increases further in postmenopausal women. Hormonal and biological factors were associated with an increased prevalence of back pain, including longer menopausal transition, premature peri and post-menopause, higher number of parities, and higher frequency of typical menopausal symptoms. Several lifestyle factors correlated with high prevalence of back pain including higher BMI, depression, inactivity levels, and alcohol consumption.

Studies hypothesized that decreasing estrogen during menopause lead to osteoporosis, attributing to endplate and disc degeneration. One study suggested that low estradiol can cause an increase in general pain sensitivity, but it was not specific to back pain.

CONCLUSIONS: The incidence of back pain in perimenopausal women varies greatly in literature. Co-factors may be helpful predictors of back pain attributed to menopause. Other elements may supersede menopause as the cause of back pain, such as previous injury, sport, competitive level, and trauma.

Podium Presentation

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