

Thoracic Intervertebral Joint Sprain

The intervertebral joint is the one that joins the various levels of the spine together. Injury to this particular joint is often the direct result of a forced movement backward or forward in the thoracic spine. Pain is often felt about two centimeters to the spine's side and can radiate into the wall of the chest and the front part of the chest itself. Pain often increases with any backward or forward movement of the spinal column.

A more common name is a facet joint sprain. The intervertebral joint is known as the facet joint.

Intervertebral joint sprains/facet joint sprains occur for a number of reasons...

What Causes an Intervertebral Joint Sprain?

- Repeated forward bending – places load on the discs which can cause degeneration and place stress through the facet joint.
- Poor posture.
- Twisting movements if the spine is stiff.
- Hypermobility in the spine: if the spine is unstable, joints can become sprained.

Thoracic Intervertebral Joint Sprain Anatomy

The spine is composed of a number of small bones, referred to as vertebrae, which are all stacked one on top of the other. Ligaments, nerves, muscles and intervertebral discs are all additional components of the spine.

Vertebrae connect together via the facet joints to create a canal that shields and protects the spinal cord. It is composed of three distinct sections creating natural curves in your back: chest area (thoracic), curves of the neck area (cervical) and lower back (lumbar). The lower part of the spine is composed of vertebrae fused together. Five lumbar vertebrae join the pelvis and the spine together.

There are 12 ribs and they attach into the side of the vertebrae of the thoracic spine.

Spinal nerves travel along the spinal canal to carry messages between the muscles and the brain. The nerves will branch out from the spinal cord out of the vertebrae openings.

How to Treat a Thoracic Intervertebral Joint Sprain:

1. Rest

If you start feeling pain when engaging in certain activities, you need to stop doing that activity and allow your body the time it needs to heal properly.

2. Ice

Apply ice to the affected area for 5-10 minutes at a time three to five times per day to help with pain and inflammation. Make sure to wrap the ice in a thin towel to prevent an ice burn from occurring on the skin.

3. Maintain Good Posture

Poor posture or regular forward bending is a big problem and causes a lot of back pains. Maintain good posture and minimize forward bending. Practicing extension exercises may also help to correct posture problems, and you can discuss this with your therapist.

4. **Physical Therapy or Manipulation**

Physical therapy mobilisation or osteopathic and chiropractic manipulation tends to be very successful for the facet joint pain. The joints become looser as the stiffness reduces from the treatment. Muscle spasm can be massaged and reduced.

5. **Stretching**

Hold stretches for about 20 to 30 seconds each in sets of three. Make sure you begin with a 5-10 minute warm-up on an exercise bike or walking before you start stretching. Only hold the stretch at the first tension point. Make sure to go slow and gentle when first stretching. You don't want to have any discomfort or excessive tension during the stretching routine. Discuss the stretching plan with your therapist for specific instructions.

Tips:

- Make sure to maintain proper posture at all times to prevent placing an undue amount of pressure on the spine.
- Leading a sedentary lifestyle is one of the worst things you can do as it causes the muscles and joints to become weak and stiff.
- Whenever lifting an object, make sure to lift it with your legs and not your back to prevent injury from occurring.
- Tightness and weakness in the muscles can cause injuries to occur.
- Exercising and building a solid core is important to helping maintain strength and flexibility in your back and spine.