Factors such as prolonged office hours, stress, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle have a cascading effect on the spine and this affects all age groups, say city doctors.

Even school going children are at a risk of developing spinal problems mainly due to the excess weight of their school bags, which burdens the spine over time. “This leads to spinal deformities and other spinal disorders, during adulthood,” says Dr Mahesh Sambatsavan, neurosurgery consultant, Columbia Asia Hospital.

He explains that spinal problems generally affect the neck or lower back. It could range from simple muscle strain or a sprain to disc disease or spondylitis. There is no particular age group or gender that is at high risk for spinal problems. Spinal problems can however affect anyone from children to elderly people.

Dr Murali Krishna, consultant neurosurgeon at Fortis Hospital says, “Spine is the bony component which connects vertebrae from skull to the pelvis, shares the load of the body and also protects the spinal cord. The main role of the spinal cord is to transmit the impulses from brain to limbs.”

**WATCH OUT FOR ALARMING SYMPTOMS**

Symptoms could range from back, neck, leg and arm pain, tingling and numbness.

Advanced stages produce weakness with varying symptoms of hesitancy and retention of urine (an indication for urgent surgical intervention).

Preventing such situations is better than going through elaborate investigations such as X-rays, MRI scans etc following which either medical or surgical treatment may be necessary.

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**PROBLEMS THAT PEOPLE FACE**

- **Neck and back pain**: This happens because of degeneration of spine. That can further cause root pain of lower limbs.
- **Brachalgia**: It is root compression of upper limb, which further causes weakness in upper and lower limbs.

**Yoga can help**

Dr Ramachandra Bhat, VC of S Vigna Yoga University, says, “The university gets lots of cases related to spine. And most of them are two-wheeler users.”

He recommends yogasanas, which he says help relieve arthritis of the neck, shoulders, elbows and wrists.

**MATSYASANA**

This asana helps in relieving stiffness in the neck and shoulders. It corrects any tendency to slump the shoulders. Strengthens arm muscles, expands the rib cage and together with the shoulder stand, the fish pose, it helps to improve the functioning of the thyroid and parathyroid glands. The asana also improves the capacity of lungs and relieves asthma.

**PARSVOTTANASANA**

This stretches the hamstrings on the back of the legs, stretches and lengthens the entire spine and masses the internal organs, especially the digestive organs. It helps in relieving digestive problems such as constipation and invigorates the nervous system.

**PANCHAMOTTANASANA**

The pyramid pose in Sanskrit purasaw means sideways and ujjam means extension. This asana strengthens and stretches legs, back and tones the abdomen. It also improves the digestive system, massages the liver and stomach. It improves complexion, hair, eyes and cools the brain.