

## PAINS YOU SHOULD NEVER IGNORE

(By Dr. Mallika Marshal)

Pain is your body's way of telling you something is wrong, and failure to address it could lead to serious problems.

**Chest/Shoulder Pain.** It could mean that you're having heart problems. Sometimes it's a pain in the chest, sometimes in the left arm, shoulder, neck, or jaw. However, many people who've had heart problems say it's not really a pain, but a pressure or discomfort. Now there are other things that can cause pain in the chest such as acid reflux, inflammation of the chest wall muscles, or inflammation of the lining of the lungs. But the thing we really worry about and want to rule out is a heart attack. So if you develop these symptoms, especially if you have risk factors for heart disease or are over 40, you need to contact your doctor right away or call 911.

**Pain in the mid-back.** If you experience pain in your back or between your shoulder blades, it's most likely caused by arthritis. But pain in this area, especially if it's severe or sudden can indicate an aortic dissection in which blood actually gets trapped in a tear of the main artery in the body, the aorta. This can be life-threatening. It more commonly occurs in people with high blood pressure or people with a history of heart disease, so if you're concerned, call your doctor right away.

**Abdominal pain.** We all get the occasional bad stomach ache but what we are talking about here is sharp pain that that hurts so much that it takes your breath away. This kind of pain could signal appendicitis or a ruptured appendix which is a very serious condition that needs to be treated right away. Severe abdominal pain could also signal problems with your gallbladder, pancreas, or even an ulcer.

**Calf pain.** Whenever we hear someone complain of calf pain, we worry about a blood clot or deep venous thrombosis in the leg. These clots affect about 2 million Americans every year and can be life-threatening...if the clot breaks off and travels to the lungs. People most at risk are those with cancer, pregnant women, people who have had recent leg surgery, bed-ridden patients, and people who have been on long plane flights. So if you have pain in your calf, especially if there's redness and swelling and no recent injury or muscle strain, you need to call your doctor right away.

**Feet or leg pain.** Burning in the feet or legs could be a sign that you have peripheral neuropathy or nerve damage. One of the most common causes is diabetes which we all know is a very serious condition. And the sad fact about diabetes is that many people who have it don't even know they do. So a burning sensation in the feet could be the first indication. Other causes of nerve damage could be injury, inflammatory conditions such as Lupus, or vitamin deficiencies. So talk to your doctor.