

## **Referred pain is a serious protective signal**

**Question:** I have been having pain under my right shoulder blade for weeks and I haven't done anything different in my daily activities and have not been in an accident. My back never hurt me in the past. Could my back pain be caused from a problem somewhere else in my body?

**Answer:** You are describing a potential mechanism in the body called referred pain. The body doesn't always elicit pain over the same area that a problem is occurring. Specific organs, muscles, glands, bones and soft tissues in the body carry common neurological and vascular supplies. The central nervous system controls and coordinates the activities of all the feedback loops from the interaction of all these different tissues. When there is a dysfunction of too much input or too little input in relationship to balanced activity the central nervous system will identify the source. One of the responses the CNS (central nervous system) may give is pain. It can be directly over the imbalanced tissue or it may be along the path of nerve or vascular distribution. The nerve and blood supply usually travel in tandem.

Understanding the anatomy, along with clinical studies of commonly referred areas of pain, helps physicians diagnose conditions. Your area of referred pain, under the right scapula, is associated with gall bladder or liver dysfunction. Additional differential diagnostic testing such as ultrasound and blood work, along with x-ray and physical examination could help isolate the true cause of your pain. Another classic initial indication in referred pain is severe mid-abdominal pain, which can imply a ruptured appendix. Metastasizing

carcinomas will refer pain from their original source also. Many of these conditions are referred to the spine itself.

Chiropractors are trained to identify whether your back pain is structural versus organic and to know when there is an emergency potentially present. It is our job to refer you to the appropriate treatment source at this point. If your back pain is not referred or organic in nature then no one is better to treat you than your Chiropractor.

**Quote of the week:** *“Some men still have their first dollar. The man who is really rich is the one who still has his first friend.”* - Anonymous