

Biological factors are now no longer considered to be the sole cause of spinal column symptoms. Although the radiological signs of spinal column wear increase with age, the number of back pain patients tends to decrease with age.

Back pain is also frequently initiated at trigger points.

Trigger points are areas in the tissue that react sensitively to pressure with pain. Myofascial trigger points are points in muscles, muscle fasciae, and tendons up to 1 cm in size that may cause pain. Pain can be “projected” into other regions from these trigger points. This type of pain is frequently observed at the back of the head (occiput), the back, the nape of the neck and the shoulders.

Tender trigger points may set off chain reactions, especially in muscle tissue. Overloading a muscle, or favoring it in response to muscle pain, causes the affected muscle to contract and tense up, resulting in a localized circulation deficiency in the muscle tissue. The patient may respond by favoring this area to ease the pain, causing other muscle groups to tense up, producing more trigger points and further exacerbating the pain.

Are there any indicators for a risk of chronification or for the presence of complex back pain?

The following signs are designated symbolically as “yellow flags” that signal the risk of a chronification of back pain:

- Persistent and returning back pain symptoms
- Work disability periods exceeding 4-6 weeks
- Radicular pain
- Low level of education
- Improper attitude and unrealistic expectations regarding the illness, depression
- Pronounced malaise and intensive experience of illness
- Poor handling of pain
- Persistent everyday stress at work and at home
- Desire to retire

The following signs are designated symbolically as “red flags” that signal the possibility of complex back pain:

- Worsening of back pain despite treatment
- Neurological deficits, paralytic symptoms
- Prior illnesses such as rheumatism, osteoporosis, tumor diseases
- Fever in connection with back pains
- Systemic cortisone treatment
- Immunosuppression
- Serious trauma in medical history