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Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute | *Innovative Solutions to Pain Management*
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Born to be Wild—Pain and the Active Baby Boomer

Born to be Wild—Pain and the Active Baby Boomer

Baby Boomers, the “Born to be Wild” generation, are living nearly twice as long as previous generations and they are remaining active. As Boomers are remaining active – they are dealing with the pain from an active lifestyle.

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of being Boomer. Baby Boomers — people born between the years 1946 and 1964 — represent nearly 29 percent of the population in the United States. The number of baby boomers in America is counted at 78.2 million, and these nearly 80 million baby boomers are reaching their late fifties. Approximately 7,900 Americans turn 60 each day. That's about 330 every hour, or more than 4 million a year. The significance of these numbers is that within 20 years one in five Americans will be older than 65.

What are some of the common causes of pain in those over 50?

Osteoporosis – is a condition affecting both men and women in which the bones thin, become porous and brittle, and fracture easily. As we get older, joints and bony connections in the back often develop what is known as osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis – is a disease in which the cartilage that cushions the ends of the bones at the joints wears away, leading to pain, stiffness, and bony overgrowths, called spurs. Osteoarthritis can cause narrowing of the openings for the exiting nerves in the back resulting in spinal stenosis.

Spinal stenosis – is a narrowing of the spinal canal and the openings for spinal nerves. After severe trauma and as we get older, changes in our spine causes a narrowing of the canal. At the same time, extra calcium forms in the canal and at the nerve root openings. The narrow openings can cause compression or pinching of the spinal cord and exiting nerves. Frequently, the nerve compression occurs only with walking or weight bearing.

Compression Fracture – is the partial collapse of a vertebral body (vertebra) in the back. This can occur after severe trauma or as the result bone demineralization from

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osteoporosis and the loss of bone calcium. These fractures not only are themselves painful, but can also cause additional pain by compressing the nerves near the fracture and can stress other support structures of the spine.

Facet Joint Pain – Facet joints are small joints in the back (posterior) of the spine and are about the size of a finger joint. These joints stabilize the spine and form a protective arch around the spinal cord. They can be easily injured and show significant deterioration as we age. The pain from facets can radiate to the upper part of the legs and feel like sciatica. Most often the pain from the facet joints is in lower back and hurts when bending, standing or walking, turning or twisting. This is the kind of pain that often hurts most when you get out of bed in the morning, or bend over and try to pick something up.

Herniated disc – is an injured disc that protrudes or pushes against a nerve. Herniated discs cause pain, numbness, weakness or tingling in the low back (lumbar region), neck (cervical region), or mid spine (thoracic region). Pain is caused when the inner core of a disk bulges or ruptures and extrudes back into the spinal canal, putting pressure on the underlying nerve root.

Degenerative Disc Disease – As we age or suffer injury, the discs located between each vertebra can lose the ability to absorb shock, causing back pain. Nerves get pinched and muscles spasm as the position of the bones and ligaments change.

Sacroiliac Joint Pain – The sacroiliac joints hold the pelvis together and alternately support all the weight when walking. Because of all the weight placed on them, they are under a lot of stress. Today, it is believed that ligament strain, weakness or injury cause sacroiliac joint pain. This pain is often extremely severe. The pain frequently radiates to the legs, knees, groin, hip and feet. Pain is frequently on one side only and it can be so severe that it prevents standing or sleeping.

The good news is that Baby Boomers do not have to live with the pain. Over the last twenty years, many chemical and anatomic pain pathways have been identified and studied. Recent advances in technology, new techniques and minimally invasive procedures in interventional pain medicine have eliminated many of the sources of pain, allowing active adults to return to a normal level of activity.

The Board Certified pain medicine specialist performs diagnostic injections to isolate and confirm the source of the patient's pain. Once identified, these painful structures are medically treated with minimally invasive techniques.

Want more information about pain management and keeping your active Baby Boomer Lifestyle? At Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute, Board-Certified physicians are dedicated to stopping your pain. They specialize in performing innovative, minimally invasive techniques and procedures that eliminate pain at its source. The goal is to allow patients to return to a normal activity level — minus the pain. <http://www.helpain.com>