

Back pain? Ozone jab offers relief

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NO NEED FOR SURGERY

Ozone-Oxygen Mix Treats Slipped Disc By Shrinking Tissue

London: Ozone gas, which acts as a shield against harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun, could soon be used to treat your sore back, as scientists have found that an ozone-oxygen gas mix can shrink tissue and reduce pain.

Researchers at the Negrin University Hospital in Spain developed a liquid form of the gas combined with oxygen and are now testing it as a way to treat slipped or herniated disc pain.

In a trial underway at the hospital, the gas mix injection has been given to patients with slipped discs who will be compared with a control group who receive a placebo treatment of just oxygen.

The treatments for slipped disc include physiotherapy and painkillers, but if the pain con-

tinues for longer than six weeks, surgery may be considered.

Around one in ten cases of a slipped disc will require surgery, where the piece of disc that is bulging is cut away. But, with the new treatment, the patient is first anaesthetised. Then, doctors use tiny cameras to guide a needle to the damaged disc, where the gas mixture is injected.

In a recent study of 60 patients in Rome, published in the journal *Spine*, those who were given the ozone therapy were twice as likely to be pain free than those in a control group.

"Ozone-oxygen injections, which are minimally invasive, seem to safely and effectively relieve pain, as well as reducing both disability and the intake of pain-relieving drugs," said the

researchers from the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Unit in Rome.

It's suggested the ozone treatment works by reducing levels of prostaglandins — compounds in the body that trigger inflammation and pain. This helps shrink the disc tissue so that it no longer presses on surrounding nerves.

Commenting on the research, Jane Tadmán of Arthritis Research UK said: "There have been 20 studies on ozone/oxygen treatment and though many show positive results in terms of reducing pain, it has not been accepted as a mainstream treatment for degenerative disc disease."

"Perhaps further studies will provide proof that this therapy can offer relief for the pain of slipped disc without surgery." **PH**