

Your Neck – A Fine Balancing Act CHIROPRACTIC TIPS FOR IMPROVING NECK HEALTH

The spinal adjustment is a very skilled procedure that should never be attempted by someone who does not have the necessary years of training and experience.

Have you ever been amazed watching a circus performer balance a bowling ball on the end of a stick? Were you impressed by the skill? Would you be impressed if the entertainer balanced the bowling ball on top of a moveable stack of blocks and managed to move the entire thing around without dropping the bowling ball or breaking the blocks? You do it every day. You balance a 10 pound mass (your head) on the top of a stack of blocks (your cervical spine) and you are able to move that mass (your head) around by tightening and/or loosening some strings (your neck and shoulder muscles). Where's your applause?

Well, your chiropractor applauds you. And he or she would like to provide you with a few pointers (though you are doing a splendid job) to help you reduce the risk of injury to your neck and suggestions on when to get professional help for neck pain.

Care of Your Neck

There are many things you can do to avoid neck pain. Learning proper postures and working to retrain your body to hold these postures at all times will decrease muscle fatigue and the likelihood of injury. Also, learning to recognize the signs of stress and muscle tension, as well as ways to alleviate stress, will enable

you to relax before tension becomes so bad it causes pain. Ask your Doctor of Chiropractic to recommend and demonstrate good relaxation techniques.

Other neck saving strategies include:

- Position your computer monitor so that you don't have to look at it from an awkward position. Your monitor should be at eye level, directly in front of you, and the center of the screen should be even with your chin when your head is upright. Also keep any material that you will be using while working in a position that requires minimal head turning. Many office supply stores sell various versions of paper or copy stands that attach next to the computer screen.
- If you spend a lot of time on the phone, use a telephone headset or speakerphone, especially if you type or write while on the phone and balance the phone between your ear and your shoulder. Request that your employer provide you with a headset or consider buying your own (for home and work use).
- When carrying shoulder bags, frequently switch the shoulder that carries the weight. When using a backpack, use both straps so that the weight is distributed to both shoulders. And when traveling, choose luggage that is stable on wheels and has a handle long enough to prevent walking along hunched over.
- DO NOT sleep on your stomach. Try to sleep on your back or on your side with a pillow to support your neck and a



Canadian researchers wanted to examine how manual therapies affected chronic neck pain caused by problems in the spine and soft tissues of the neck so they reviewed the results of published research and compiled the results from the best studies. And the results were simple: "There is moderate- to high-quality evidence that subjects with chronic neck pain not due to whiplash and without arm pain and headaches show clinically important improvements from a course of spinal manipulation or mobilization at 6, 12, and up to 104 days posttreatment." (It should be noted that studies which included whiplash, headache, and arm pain were purposely not included in the review so that the effects of manual therapies on chronic mechanical neck alone would be clearer.) **Vernon H, et al. *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*. March 2007; Vol. 30, Iss. 3, pp. 215-227.**

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pillow to support your knees (under your knees when on your back, between your knees when on your side).

- Avoid reading or watching television in bed. Too often, this requires lying on your side with the head propped up by an arm bent at the elbow. This position stresses both your neck and your wrist.

There are many other things that people do every day without realizing that over time they can lead to neck pain and stiffness. If you follow the above advice and still have frequent neck pain, consult your Doctor of Chiropractic who will help you to pinpoint

the cause(s) of your pain so that you can work at preventing it from happening again.

When to Seek Professional Help

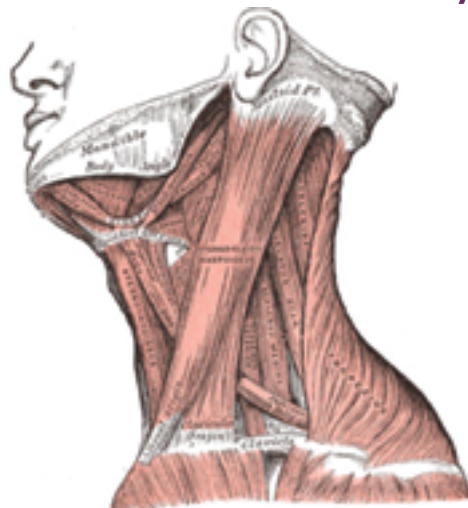
If you have neck pain and stiffness that lasts for longer than 24 to 48 hours, call your chiropractor for an appointment – you will need to be sure it is not a condition that requires prompt attention. You should seek immediate care if you are involved in a motor vehicle accident since you may have sustained a condition called whiplash, which is an injury that occurs when you are struck unexpectedly (most often from behind) and your neck “whips” in the opposite direction that your body is moving. Common

symptoms of whiplash include headache, neck pain and stiffness, dizziness, visual disturbances, or pain in the shoulders or arms. Symptoms may not appear until days or, in some instances, weeks or months after the accident, which is why immediate examination is necessary to begin the healing process. If you have neck pain that worsens when you cough, laugh, or sneeze, spreads into the shoulders and arms, or if you also have nausea, headache, visual disturbances, or dizziness, you need to seek care immediately.

Your Doctor of Chiropractic will begin your appointment with a detailed history and examination (looking especially for any recent events that may have triggered

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Illustrated HealthWays



A picture is worth a thousand words. The above picture illustrates the complexity of the musculature of the neck – and demonstrates the level of susceptibility of the neck to injury due to misuse. The “Research Review” demonstrates how common neck injuries from misuse can be. For a detailed discussion of the above picture and care of your neck, please ask your Doctor of Chiropractic.

your pain). Anything you think may play a role in your pain should be brought to the attention of your doctor. And don't be afraid or embarrassed that it won't help – if it doesn't provide clues as to the cause of your discomfort, it may provide information on the treatment best suited for you.

Chiropractic treatment may include spinal adjustment or manipulation, a specific procedure that may relieve nerve pressure, relax muscles, and/or restore normal motion to the spine. The spinal adjustment is a very skilled procedure that should never be attempted by someone who does not have the necessary years of training and experience. In some instances, depending on the cause of your neck pain, spinal manipulation is NOT recommended, so do not expect every visit to the chiropractor to include an adjustment. Spinal adjustments are prescribed at specific sites, with specific force, and *only* following a thorough examination which determines whether the procedure is appropriate. Never accept adjustments or manipulation from a person who is not expertly well-educated and trained in all aspects of the procedure.

Chiropractic doctors often use other non-invasive, drugless therapies in their treatment. These may include, but are not limited to, ultrasound, electric muscle stimulation, moist heat or cold therapy. Any changes in posture that you need to make, or changes in exercise, diet and nutrition, or other habits that will improve your health and well-being will also be discussed with you.

If your Doctor of Chiropractic finds that another type of health care provider would be more appropriate for your case, a referral will be made. If at any time you have questions regarding your treatment or recovery, ASK your doctor. He or she wants to ensure the quickest, most complete recovery possible, and your participation in treatment is vital.



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Sleep for your Heart's Sake

Getting a good night's sleep may be more important than keeping you from being in a foul mood. New research suggests that a lack of sleep may affect the heart and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. After testing cardiac function of 39 people after a night of 10 hours of sleep, researchers allowed the same people only 4 hours of sleep for 5 nights and then re-tested the function of their hearts. After the sleep deprivation, all of the subjects had faster heart rates and their hearts were less able to adjust to stress and stimulation (called "heart rate variability"). In previous studies, a reduced heart rate variability has been linked to heart disease, other diseases, and high blood pressure. "If our finding is sustained by a larger group and further analysis, it may suggest why short sleep duration is associated with a heightened risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality," said Siobhan Banks, one of the researchers on the study. The study was performed at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and was presented at the 2007 meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies in Minneapolis, MN. (*Agence France Presse*. June 13, 2007.)

Improve Sleep by Taking Measures to Prevent Nightmares

The U.S. National Library of Medicine suggests the following can increase the risk of nightmares:

- Eating before going to bed
- Anxiety and stress
- A major life event
- Illness
- Reaction to a medication
- Alcohol withdrawal *or* excess
- Breathing problems
- Sleep disorders

HealthDay News.

Vitamin D May Prevent Cancer

After it was observed that people in warmer and sunnier areas have lower cancer rates than similar people in northern areas of the world, researchers decided to study the effects of vitamin D on health. Vitamin D was chosen for study because it is the vitamin that the body produces on its own with exposure to the sun – so that people who are exposed to more sun (such as in warmer climates) are naturally going to have higher levels of the vitamin than in cooler climates where people are less likely to be outside throughout the year. For the study, 1,179 healthy women (average age of 67) were divided into three groups: one group received calcium and vitamin D3 supplements (the version of the vitamin that the body produces naturally), one group received only calcium supplements, and the third group received placebos. Initially studying the effects of vitamin D and calcium on bone health, the researchers of this small study noticed that significantly fewer of the women who received vitamin D3 developed cancer than the women in the other two groups. The women who received vitamin D3 (available in some stand-alone, vitamin D-only supplements) and calcium had a 77% lower risk of developing any cancer. Since there was no difference in cancer risk between the women taking a placebo and those taking the calcium only, it was theorized that it was the vitamin D that made the difference. Additional larger and more focused studies will be necessary to confirm the results of this study. (*The Associated Press*. June 8, 2007.)

Please consult with your Doctor of Chiropractic for information on appropriate dosages of vitamin and mineral supplements that will be most beneficial to your health.

Q Why do so many people have back problems?

A The standard statistic for many years has been that 80% of the American public will have back problems – if they don't already. It seems like such an alarming number (8 out of 10), but strike up a conversation with several people about back pain and it is easy to understand the magnitude of this situation. Many back problems originate from acute trauma, such as sports injuries, slips and falls, motor vehicle accidents, and work injuries. However, most occur and are perpetuated by poor postural and body movement habits day after day. We learned many of these habits when growing up by modeling the behavior of those older than us. We did this without

knowing that most of these people had developed back problems well before we started copying their behavior. What **looked** normal to us was the blueprint for developing and perpetuating back problems. What looks normal to us is actually abnormal to the human body in many ways.

Fortunately, Doctors of Chiropractic thoroughly understand how the human body should work. They are quite capable of actively passing this important information on to you. This can certainly have a positive effect on the quality of your life.

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SHOULD BE SHARED.
PASS THIS NEWSLETTER
ON TO A FRIEND.