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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Stiff Neck or Back?

Your spine is not a rigid column of stacked bones or “vertebrae”. A healthy spine has a small amount of movement between each of the 24 vertebrae. When these small amounts of movement are added up, the overall mobility or flexibility of the spine is actually quite amazing. In order for your spine to remain healthy, it must have good mobility. Between each of the vertebrae, there are two small joints. These joints have fluid inside of them that lubricates and nourishes it. As a joint moves, the fluid is able to circulate around and around inside the joint. Whenever a one or more of these joints become stiff or jammed, the circulation of this fluid decreases and the joint cannot get the constant nourishment it needs to stay healthy. In fact, any joint that is unable to move well is prone to becoming very sore and inflamed when you try to do your daily activities. I see this scenario everyday in my office. Someone comes in and describes how their neck or back has felt a “little stiff” for a few or more days in a row. Then, they lifted something or did an activity that should normally not bother them and suddenly they became very sore. Chiropractors call this a “subluxation”. This word is used to describe a series of events that have occurred leading to the inevitable pain that people come to see us for.

- 1) First of all, the joints in a region of the spine lose part or all of their individual movement. This may have been from putting too much stress on the joints, as in lifting too heavy or repetitively, or it could simply be from not getting enough exercise.
- 2) Inflammation or swelling may accumulate in or around the joints.
- 3) Once these joints become inflamed and sore, the nerves exiting the spine that control the muscles of the back and neck can become “irritated or pinched”.
- 4) These nerves control the muscles around the neck and back. This is why when you have an irritated nerve; you also experience painful muscle spasms.
- 5) Finally, any joint that remains stiff or tight for prolonged periods of time will be more likely to experience the onset or progression of osteoarthritis.

Your chiropractor is trained extensively on how to perform a series of “adjustments” to restore the mobility or movement to these stiff joints. Only then can the inflammation be flushed out as the joint moves. This can relieve the “irritation” of the nerves, which allows the muscle spasms to subside. Once the mobility of the joint is restored and it is maintained that way long enough for the joint to heal itself, the frequency of the “adjustments” should decrease. In simplified terms, if you prevent or treat the cause of the problem (the lack of movement in the joints of the spine), the symptoms (pain, muscle spasm, and inflammation) will disappear on their own.