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

Camping Without Pain

On this weekend, there will be two separate groups of people camping in the Merritt area. Those that are taking in the Merritt Mountain Music Festival and those that camp out of town to avoid the resulting Music Fest crowds. Either way, there are certain things one should do to avoid a bout of neck or back pain while camping.

When you camp, it is impossible to take your favorite ultra supportive mattress with you. This does not mean you have to sleep on the hard ground. Sleep on something that will offer a little cushion and support to your back. A sleeping "foamy" can be light and portable. Even a good air mattress is better than nothing. Some clinical observations I made while working at the first aid trailer last year at the Music Fest was that you should not use a cheap air mattress. If they are exposed to excess "friction" on rough surfaces, such as the ground, they tend to get holes in them and "leak" air. If you are sharing the air mattress with a friend, the air pressure in it should be greater. A foamy is much more reliable. It can handle friction over any rough surface without deflating. However, the heavier you are, the thicker or denser the foam should be.

If you can, take your favorite pillow with you wherever you go. Using a completely different pillow, rolled up pair of jeans, or the empty box from the case of beer you consumed is just asking for a stiff neck in the morning. If you do not have your favorite pillow, try to keep your neck in a neutral position when sleeping. If you sleep on your side, your neck should not be bent sideways toward the ground. If you sleep on your back, your neck should not be bent backwards. Basically, if you imagine the position of your neck and head while you sit up straight in a chair, this is the position your neck should be in when you are lying down. It is also very important to not sleep on your stomach. Even the hardest of the hardcore music festers in "campground C" have to breath when they sleep. When you lye on your stomach, you have to turn your head to either side and keep it there all night. This is far from a desirable position for your neck and can result in some serious pain/stiffness in the morning.

If you have been experiencing mild back or neck stiffness for the past week or more prior to going camping, you may wish to address this before you go. If there is already mild

stiffness in the joints of your neck or back you challenge these joints even more by sleeping on a hard surface or without a pillow, you are more prone to having problems. Before heading out for a relaxing weekend camping by a lake or for a crazy weekend of drinking/hooting/hollering at the Music Festival, see your chiropractor. He or she is specifically trained to do adjustments to restore the proper movement to the joints of the back or neck so that you are less vulnerable to waking up sore.

To further prevent neck and back problems from putting a damper on you weekend of camping, here are a couple simple stretches to keep you limber.