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

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## Back or Neck Feeling Vulnerable?

Does your back or neck feel stiff when you are trying to fall asleep or when you get up in the morning? Does your back feel vulnerable when you bend over the sink to brush your teeth or wash your face? Do you have trouble turning your head far enough to do a proper shoulder check when driving? Has your back ever felt mildly sore or weak when you bend over to put your shoes or socks on? If you can answer yes to any of these questions, or if any other simple tasks you normally should be able to do cause even mild discomfort in your neck or back, you may be experiencing "the calm before the storm".

What I really mean is that if the joints and muscles of your spine are not as flexible and healthy as they should be, you are vulnerable for even simple activities to cause serious pain and disability. Throughout your average day, you are exposed to physical and emotional stress. This may include poor ergonomics at work, emotional stress in your home or at your workplace, poor posture, lack of exercise, or subtle injuries and accidents. The physical results of these "stressors" can accumulate and cause unwanted changes in your body. For example, the most common scenario chiropractors see is when the joints of your spine and pelvis begin to stiffen or lose their "mobility", preventing you from bending or turning as far as you normally should be able to. Even simple activities can make some of these joints slightly sore and inflamed. When you have even mild joint stiffness and inflammation in and around the joints of your spine, it is only a matter of time before the nerves exiting between each of the vertebrae become irritated. These irritated nerves control the muscles that attach to the spine and can cause subtle spasm or tension. This will even further limit the mobility of the joints.

Because there does not have to be any significant pain or disability at this point, most people ignore or simply dismiss the symptoms as being normal. However, when you are in this state, you are very vulnerable. The next time you challenge or stress your spine, the flexibility and mobility you need and should normally have is just not there. This is why you can end up on the floor immobilized in pain after attempting even a simple task. If you are lucky enough that your symptoms have never become that severe, you may just experience a few bouts of moderate pain and disability that seem to disappear over a few days to weeks. Either way, when the symptoms disappear, the problem is likely still there and able to rear its ugly head all over again.

Chiropractors call this combination of stiff joints, muscle spasm or tension, irritated spinal nerves, and inflammation a “SUBLUXATION”. The cure for this problem is to restore the mobility of the joints, decrease the irritation of the nerves, which will allow the muscle spasm to release, and the inflammation to be “flushed” out of the joints. This can be accomplished by doing “adjustments” or “manipulation” to the affected areas. Chiropractors are the most trained to perform this type of treatment and often combine it with stretching and strengthening exercises. This type of treatment requires no medications or surgery; therefore, it is much more safe and conservative than many other forms of treatment. As well, when chiropractic “adjustments” are combined with regular exercise and stretching, it can prevent future exacerbations of low back problems. It has been well documented that by having a chiropractor regularly identify and “adjust” the restricted or stiff regions in your spine, little problems can be corrected before they become severe problems.

If you feel that you may have “vulnerable” areas in you spine, consult a chiropractor before any mild problems (whether they hurt yet or not) lead to larger ones that interrupt whatever it is that you like to do the most.