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

Take Steps at Home to Lessen Neck or Back Pain

Cooking dinner. Mowing the lawn. Mopping the floor. They may seem minor, but everyday tasks can take a toll on your body. And when you have a neck or back condition, running a household can seem like an overwhelming job. If you suffer from one or both of these problems, the biggest mistake you can make is trying to do everything at once. I see this everyday in my chiropractic practice. Patients are stuck in a cycle — they do too much, causing a flare-up in their neck or back condition. This forces them to reduce the number of household tasks they accomplish each day and their inflammation and pain subsides. After a few days, the inflammation and pain has decreased and they try to make up for lost time by attempting too many tasks again. Then, they experience the pain and inflammation once again.

If this sounds like you, there is good news. You can see a chiropractor to help you regain some of the lost mobility in your neck or back, allowing it to heal naturally. This will allow you to successfully attempt more activities without the painful repercussions. In addition to chiropractic treatment, there are many other steps you can take to make the work in and around your home easier to manage. Try to follow these guidelines:

Organize - By planning ahead you can organize your tasks in ways that will allow you to accomplish the same amount of work without all the painful physical repercussions. For instance, clean one area or floor at a time. Do not try to vacuum or wash all of your floors in one day. If you're doing laundry in the basement, combine tasks that can be done there to avoid hikes up and down the stairs.

Prioritize - Accept the fact that you won't be able to get everything done in one day. Decide which are the most important tasks to accomplish and focus on them. Other items can wait until another day.

Distribute - Break tasks into smaller segments that can be accomplished over a number of days. For example, carrying laundry can strain your neck and back. When the clothes are wet, bend over properly as you manoeuvre them into the dryer. If your washer and dryer are in your basement, you can spend a lot of time running up and down the stairs. To ease the strain, do a load of laundry every other day instead of all in one day. Another option — set time limits for yourself. For instance, clean the closet for 30 minutes each day until the job is done.

Alternate - Classify your tasks and alternate them accordingly:

- a) Light tasks and medium tasks. Alternate light tasks with medium tasks. If you do a heavy task, plan on taking a break after completing it and follow it up with a lighter task. This gives your spine a break and allows you to work longer.
- b) Standing tasks and sitting tasks. If you stand up while washing the dishes, then plan on sitting down, when you can, while preparing a meal. This keeps one part of your spine from taking all of the strain the entire time. In addition, whether you do a chore standing or sitting often is determined by habit. You may be used to folding laundry while standing by your bed, but remember that you can also do it while sitting.

Pace yourself - Remember to take regular rest breaks. This doesn't mean you have to lie down and sleep, just make sure to relax the area of your spine that you just used. Length of rest varies person by person — listen to your body. Stop for a break before you're tired or stiff.

Delegate - Another way to distribute work is to ask for assistance or hire someone to help you. This is especially important with strenuous activities that put stress on your joints and can cause pain and fatigue. Family and friends are good sources for help. Don't forget that even young children can be given regular chores.

In conjunction with seeing your chiropractor, try these recommendations to help you live a healthier and happier life. This article and over 100 more are available at www.merrittchiro.com.