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

If Not a Disk, Then What is it?

As I have mentioned before, most of the people who enter my office suffering from low back pain are not feeling the way they are because of a herniated or “slipped” disk. More commonly, the source of their pain is an inflamed joint, which causes nerve irritation, and eventually leads to muscle spasm. The joints that are often involved are located between the vertebrae (facet joints) and at the back of the pelvis (sacroiliac joints) –see diagram.

In a person who sees their chiropractor regularly, exercises three to four times per week, and does a regular stretching routine, the joints in his or her spine and pelvis will function normally. This means that each of these joints has their full potential motion and there is no chronic restriction in the movement of these areas. Then, when they physically challenge their back, the joints are much more likely to be able to handle the demand put on them. In the average person who does not exercise often, stretch regularly, or see a chiropractor, he or she often has areas in his or her spine and pelvis where the joints do not have their full potential motion. When this lack of mobility in the joints is present, even simple tasks can result in them becoming acutely inflamed.

Once a joint in the spine or pelvis is acutely inflamed, the adjacent spinal nerves can become irritated. These nerves branch off of from the spinal cord and exit the spine between each of the vertebrae, directly beside the inflamed joint. This causes the nerve to become hyperactive or overstimulated. These nerves control many different things, including muscle contraction, skin sensation, and pain sensation. This is why a pinched or irritated nerve in the low back can cause pain, numbness, muscle spasm, and in more severe cases even muscle weakness. Chiropractors have a very specific term they use to describe the scenario of an inflamed joint that irritates a nerve, resulting in pain and muscle spasm. It is called a “SUBLUXATION”.

To eliminate a subluxation, the proper motion of the affected joint must first be restored. This is done by undergoing a series of chiropractic “adjustments”. Only when the joint has its motion fully restored can it begin to heal itself. It is designed to be able to do this on its own, without medication. As the joint inflammation decreases, so does

the irritation of the nerve. This results in a decrease in the pain, numbness, and muscle spasm. This natural state of joint mobility must then be maintained until the body is able to heal the injured joint completely and naturally.

Chiropractors are the only health care practitioners who are specifically trained to eliminate a subluxation. The reason why this form of treatment is so successful is because it addresses the actual “cause” of the problem (the lack of motion in the injured joint) rather than the “symptoms” (the resulting nerve irritation, pain, numbness, and muscle spasm).

