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

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## Combine Exercise and Chiropractic

For years I have been telling patients in my office that they need to do two things to keep their backs healthy. The first is to exercise consistently and the second is to see their chiropractor regularly. Even if you do only one of the two, your back will remain more flexible and less prone to injury. However, the greatest results are achieved when exercise is combined with regular chiropractic treatment.

A recent study in Europe has proven this, again. This study was published in the medical journal *Spine* earlier this year (2003:28(6), pp. 525-532). The authors took a group of 50 very chronic low back patients who had been off work from 2-6 months. These 50 people were divided into 2 groups. One received *exercise only* while the other group received *manipulation and exercise*. Patient improvement was measured before the exercise sessions began and at four weeks, six months and one year after the sessions ended.

Patients in the "manipulation" and exercise group received the exact same form of treatment that chiropractors do and we call it "adjusting" the spine. Along with the manipulations, this group performed general exercises for the trunk, spine and legs.

Results? Guess what? Both groups showed significant improvements. However, the group that was "adjusted" experienced much greater success than the exercise only group in all areas of improvement (pain, functional status, etc.) at every stage in the follow-up testing. The average reduction in pain was double for the exercise and manipulation group, compared to exercise only group. As well, when the study ended, the manipulation and exercise group was significantly more likely to have returned to work (67%, vs. 27% for the exercise group).

The biggest plus - and this really gets the attention of health insurance people (except for our provincial government) - one year later, the exercise-only patients were over three times more likely to still be off work than the ones who had manipulation done to them.

These results were spectacular even though inexperienced practitioners did the manipulations. If the manipulations were done by practitioners who underwent years of training on this exact form of treatment and primarily do this all day, every day in their practices (specifically, chiropractors), the results would have likely been even more significant.

In summary, chiropractic manipulation is leading the way in the successful treatment of the actual cause of low back and neck pain. However, when you combine regular exercise with this form of treatment, your improvements will occur faster and last longer.