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

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## Back Pain From Your Gall Bladder?

It is likely that 60% of the patients treated each week in our chiropractic practice are there for some form of back pain. Usually it is due to a traumatic injury, heavy/repetitive activities, or just a general lack of activity. Because chiropractors likely see more back injury cases than any other healthcare practitioner, they become pretty good at identifying what the problem is. But, once in a while a person with a tricky case of back pain will walk in.

A prime example is when a person comes to see a chiropractor for pain at the right shoulder blade and he or she does not recall doing anything that may have injured it. He or she may also be experiencing abdominal pain at the same time. This may sound strange but it is possible. When an injury occurs at the right upper back or shoulder blade, nerves from that region carry the message of "ouch" to a specific area in the spinal cord, usually at the level of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> thoracic (mid back) vertebrae. The message of "ouch" then travels up the spinal cord to the brain, making you consciously aware that the shoulder blade is experiencing pain. When the gallbladder is under distress (such as when painful gallstones are present), it also has nerves that carry the message of "ouch". These nerves travel to the spinal cord in almost exactly the same path as the nerves from the shoulder blade. These two different paths then both pass on their potential message of pain to the same single path that travels up to the brain. Because there is only a single "ouch" message from two possible sources, the brain cannot tell if the pain is originating from the shoulder blade or from the gallbladder. This is why people who have painful gallstones will usually also feel pain in the upper right back or shoulder blade when there is really nothing wrong in that area. This same scenario can occur other areas as well. For example, the esophagus can refer pain to between the shoulder blades, the pancreas can refer pain to the middle and right mid low back, The spleen can refer pain to the left mid to lower back, and the uterus/cervix can refer pain to the middle of the lower back.

A chiropractor is highly trained to identify muscle, nerve, or joint problems in your back. If there is a possibility that your pain is originating from another source, such

as your gallbladder, then he or she will refer you to another healthcare practitioner that may be able to help you further.