

Dr. Colin Gage

Nicola Valley Chiropractic
2076A Granite Ave.
P.O. Box 909
Merritt, BC
V1K 1B8

Ph: (250) 378-5456
Fax: (250) 378-8259
Email: info@merrittchiro.com
Website: www.merrittchiro.com

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

What is a Subluxation?

What is a “subluxation”? This is a question that is not easily answered. Although the medical profession may have a completely different definition for a subluxation, this does not mean one is correct and the other is wrong. For this article, I will be discussing what a “chiropractic subluxation” is. To make this simple, I will give you a simplified definition of what exactly a chiropractic subluxation is by using an actual patient we will call “Mr. Smith”.

Mr. Smith came into our office with acute low back pain after cutting up and splitting a large pine tree. It was quickly determined that the joints, nerves, and muscles in his low back were the source of his symptoms. I explained to him that to fix his problem, I would not be “cracking the bones” or “putting the bones back into place”. Although some patients describe their chiropractic treatments in this manner, bones do not go “out of place” and they are not being “cracked”. What Mr. Smith actually had was what I call a “chiropractic subluxation” in his lower back. A “chiropractic subluxation” is really just a term to describe what is happening when a joint in the body, particularly in the spine, is not working properly. His scenario, and most people that enter our office for low back pain, is a combination of the following four problems:

The first problem was a lack of “movement” or “mobility” in the joints of Mr. Smith’s low back. He had sprained or irritated the joints in his back and, as a result, they became very “stiff or restricted” in their movement. In extreme cases, the joints may even become “locked” in one position.

The second problem was the “swelling or inflammation” in and around Mr. Smith’s injured joint. Normally, the joints in his low back act as little mechanical pumps, just like the fuel pump on your car. The more it is able to move, the better it will be able to “pump” or remove the swelling out of the joint. When Mr. Smith’s back has very tight muscles and stiff joints, the ability of the pump or joint to remove the excess swelling is reduced significantly.

The third problem was a “pinching or irritation” of one or more of the nerves exiting the spine. These nerves control pain sensation, skin sensation, muscle activity,

and contribute to the control of many internal organs. Each nerve exits from the spinal cord and passes between each of the vertebrae or bones of the spine. When a joint or its surrounding soft tissues are inflamed or not functioning properly, the nerves can become irritated. There may be a physical pinching of the nerve or even just a chemical irritation from the swelling around the joint.

The fourth problem Mr. Smith had was muscle spasm and severe pain. When the nerves exiting or running along his spine passed by the injured and inflamed joints, they became irritated and functioned in a hyperactive state. These hyperactive nerves control pain sensation and the muscles in his back. When they are irritated and become hyperactive, Mr. Smith will feel severe pain and his low back muscles will go into spasm. Since most of these spastic muscles attach to the bones or vertebrae of his spine, even less movement or mobility of the joints was possible. This compounded his problem even further.

In summary, the “subluxation” in Mr. Smith’s back was a combination of: a lack of potential movement or mobility within the joint, swelling in and around the joint, which irritated the neighbouring nerves, resulting in severe pain and muscle spasm. Mr. Smith underwent chiropractic “manipulation” or “adjustments” to the injured joints and their mobility was restored. This restored movement allowed the joint to efficiently pump or flush the swelling out of the injured area. Then, when the inflammation or swelling had decreased, the nerve irritation lessened. As a result, the muscle spasm and pain subsided. He was on the road to natural and complete recovery.