

Dr. Colin Gage

Nicola Valley Chiropractic
2076A Granite Ave.
P.O. Box 909
Merritt, BC
V1K 1R8

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

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

Chronic Pain

If you've ever pulled a muscle, burned your hand or smacked your head, you've felt it – sometimes for days. It's pain, and as bad as it feels, it's actually good for you. Acute pain is nature's way of telling you you've been injured and alerting you to be careful not to make it worse. Eventually, particularly with proper treatment, the injured tissue heals and the acute pain goes away.

Now imagine feeling pain all the time. Chronic pain – continuous pain lasting longer than six months – affects an estimated 30 to 50 million Americans (couldn't find Canadian statistics). It can result from injuries that never fully heal, such as lower back injuries. Chronic pain interferes with work, restricts everyday activities, and can even take the joy out of life.

Because many chronic pain sufferers become stressed or depressed, psychologists can intervene with techniques such as stress reduction or biofeedback. Health care practitioners, such as Chiropractors, can help patients feel more comfortable, and teach them ways to perform everyday tasks without aggravating their pain. They may also suggest stretching and strengthening exercises.

Chronic pain can develop as a result of delaying the appropriate treatment of a new acute injury. For example, you injure your neck or back, then what should have been a simple musculoskeletal injury is not treated up front. Too many people believe the injury will heal and the pain will "go away" or disappear in time. In fact, any pain that persists for weeks does require immediate intervention.

In addition, sleep deprivation often occurs with long-term pain. Patients who don't sleep well because of their pain can develop more diffuse symptoms, and then depression, and it becomes challenging to overcome that cycle.

When it comes to chronic pain, long-term use of opioid (narcotic) drugs like codeine and Vicodin (hydrocodone) should be discouraged. They're not appropriate or effective for chronic pain, and a person can become addicted or dependent on them. This view is supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which warns that opioids are among the most commonly abused and misused class of prescription drugs, along with some depressants used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders, plus certain stimulants.

Opioids may interact with other drugs and are only safe to use with other drugs under a physician's supervision, the NIDA website says. Typically, they should not be used with substances such as alcohol, antihistamines, barbiturates or benzodiazepines. These drugs slow down breathing, and their combined effects could risk life-threatening respiratory depression.

Chronic use of opioids can result in tolerance to the drugs so that higher doses must be taken to obtain the same initial effects, the NIDA site continues, adding: Long-term use also can lead to physical dependence – the body adapts to the presence of the drug, and withdrawal symptoms occur if use is reduced abruptly. Symptoms of withdrawal can include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes with goosebumps and involuntary leg movements.

The best remedy for chronic pain? The answer is the same for any other disease, prevention! For example, when it comes to back pain, don't get overweight, exercise regularly, and lift things properly. In addition, see your chiropractor regularly so that initial small problem can be identified and corrected before it becomes a big problem.