

Topic of the Week

Issue 3, January 2010

WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

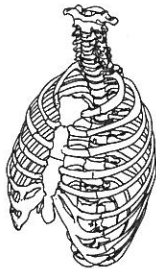
Subluxation Degeneration and Your Health

Presented by: **Mark J. Glesener, DC**

What is a subluxation, and how can it affect your health? Your chiropractor uses the term *subluxation* to describe the improper alignment and/or function in a specific area of the spine. This situation affects the normal spread of nerve impulses between the brain and the rest of the body.

Chiropractic is the only profession dedicated to the proper identification and correction of spinal subluxations. The chiropractic adjustment is the main tool used for subluxation correction. Whether by hand, or with the use of a mechanical adjusting tool, your chiropractor applies a specific force to the affected vertebra to restore natural position of your bones and movement of your joints.

Why is alignment of your spine so important? First and foremost, it provides stability for your skeletal structure. Without it, you would resemble a jellyfish! Spinal structure and alignment lends balance and flexibility to your frame.



Secondly, contained within the spine is the spinal cord. It's a collection of nerve fibers and cells connecting the brain and the rest of the body. The nervous system is a fast-acting communication network. It monitors and regulates all other vital systems of the body - such as the circulatory system, immune system, muscular system and digestive system. Improper coordination or regulation of any one of these physiological systems can lead to health problems.

How does a subluxation cause disease? The spine contains 33 vertebrae (including those that comprise the sacrum and coccyx) and each is positioned to allow for the safe passage of nerve tissue. Between every vertebra, nerve roots branch off the spinal cord and exit the spine to become peripheral nerves. These nerves then travel throughout the body to connect to the various organs, tissues and other bodily systems.

Studies have shown that very little pressure or irritation is required to cause a significant impairment to the nerve that is connected to the root.¹ Given the nerve roots close proximity to the spinal facet joints and the intervertebral discs, even small amounts of compression or inflammation caused by joint misalignment or damage may produce disease in these local tissues.

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Exercise of the Week

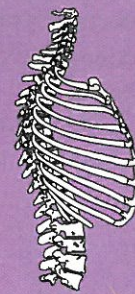
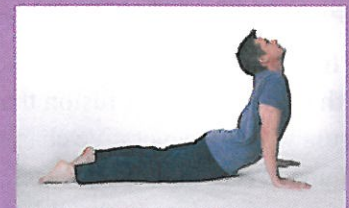
Child's pose with forward reach – lumbar flexion

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)

Start: On hands and knees. Be aware of position of spine – start with a neutral spine or a flat back.

Exercise: Allow hips to lower toward heels, and reach arms out in front. Try to achieve a fully rounded lower back. Hold for 10-30 seconds.



The Four Phases of Subluxation Degeneration²

If left unattended, a spinal subluxation can progress to varying degrees of spinal degeneration. Depending upon the degree of degeneration, chiropractic care is more likely to reverse the effects and offer a cure. Here are the four different phases of subluxation degeneration:

Phase I: This phase represents the early changes caused by chronic spinal subluxation. It's characterized mainly by abnormal segmental motion and/or gross changes to the normal postural curves without any degenerative changes that could be seen on an x-ray. Soft tissues surrounding the subluxated joints often show changes in tone and the early stages of scar tissue (fibrosis).

Phase II: This stage represents the onset of bone and joint changes that accompany chronic spinal subluxations. The most common early signs of degeneration are irregular joint surfaces and decrease disc height.

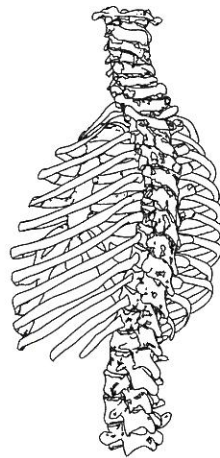
Phase III: This point is typically associated with extensive joint and/or disc degeneration, accompanied by the bone changes that occur (i.e. bone spurs) when the body tries to stabilize the area. Early stages of spinal fusion begin to appear during this phase.

Phase IV: This phase is characterized by the extensive bony fusion that occurs when degenerative changes are left uncorrected for many years. Typically only seen in the elderly (65+ yrs), it may occur in younger individuals who experience severe trauma, infection or surgery.

Can subluxation degeneration be corrected? Fortunately, chiropractic care has been shown to stop the progression of degenerative changes in most individuals in phases I to III. The chiropractic adjustment accomplishes this by re-establishing proper alignment and movement of the affected motion segments of the spine. As a result, abnormal tension is removed from the joints, discs and nerves, and this promotes the health of these tissues.

Some acute episodes of subluxation spinal pain can be alleviated with one chiropractic adjustment. But most spinal conditions require weeks, months or even years of consistent care to create total correction. Ask your chiropractor to assess your spine for subluxations in the early phases of spinal degeneration. And have your spine adjusted to prevent these smaller problems from progressing into more serious health conditions.

Chiropractic pioneer D.D. Palmer made an important observation about the impact of subluxation: "A subluxated vertebra... is the cause of 95 percent of all diseases... The other five percent is caused by displaced joints other than those of the vertebral column."³



Quote of the Week

"I had no shoes and complained, until I met a man who had no feet."

- Anonymous

References and Sources:

1. Kent C. Models of Vertebral Subluxation: A Review. *Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research* 1996; 1(1): 1-7.
2. Flesia JM. The Vertebral Subluxation Complex. Part II: An Outline. *ICA International Review of Chiropractic* 1992 (Oct.): 19-23.
3. Palmer DD. The Science, Art and Philosophy of Chiropractic. Portland Oregon: Portland Printing House Company, 1910.

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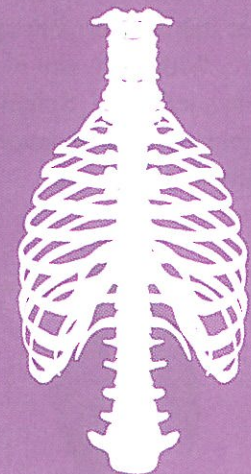
newsletters are written and designed by
Mediadoc
exclusively for its chiropractic clients.

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Design: Elena Zhukova

Photos: Fred Goldstein



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