

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

Chiropractic Care for Neck Pain

For millions of neck pain sufferers, the discomfort isn't a simple annoyance: It's a chronic condition exacerbated by daily stress. What's worse is how many are affected: 70 percent of the population will experience neck pain at some point.

Fortunately, research shows that chiropractic care works to resolve neck pain by uncovering its underlying cause. Dr. Gravesen wants to share research about how chiropractic eliminates neck pain at its source.

Address the Real Cause

If your "solution" to intermittent or chronic neck pain is painkillers, Dr. Gravesen urges you to reconsider. Over-the-counter or prescription pain medication does nothing to solve the problem's underlying cause. Furthermore, perpetual use of these drugs is linked to a host of side effects, such as gastrointestinal issues, chronic headache and fibromyalgia.

In contrast, doctors of chiropractic focus on the true root of spinal pain. Neck pain is the body's way of indicating something's wrong. Don't mask that critical warning with drugs. Misalignments in any area of the spine, from the neck to the low back, cause

dysfunction and restricted movement. These dysfunctional areas are known as **vertebral subluxations**. Dr. Gravesen corrects vertebral subluxations with safe and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**.

Fast, Effective Pain Relief

Not only is chiropractic care highly effective, but it also works quickly to restore mobility and end pain. New analysis illustrates that improvement may start after one chiropractic adjustment.

Scientists from Toronto analyzed nine clinical trials involving people with neck pain. Through a "systematic analysis," they assessed each patient's

reported change in neck pain after a single chiropractic adjustment.

Studies where the patients received chiropractic adjustments (also called spinal manipulation) reported "immediate changes" in a rating scale measuring neck pain and mobility.

The authors summarize that "there is moderate-to-high quality evidence that immediate clinically important improvements are obtained from a single session of spinal manipulation. The evidence for mobilization is less substantial, with fewer studies reporting smaller immediate changes. There is insufficient evidence for ischemic compression to draw conclusions.

There is no evidence for a single session of massage or manual traction for chronic neck pain." (*J Man Manip Ther* 2008;16:E42-52.)

It's important, however, even if you enjoy swift improvement with chiropractic care, to not discontinue care. The doctor has created a custom-tailored plan, and following it is necessary for continued progress. Chiropractic is focused on prevention. Just as you would never think of only getting your teeth cleaned when you have a cavity, it's also vital to care for your spine even when you are pain-free.

Muscle Tension

Did you know that most adults sit for 10 or more hours each day? All that sitting often leads to poor posture, which in turn may cause neck muscles to stiffen. The result is a tug-of-war with spinal bones. This chain of events frequently triggers the formation of vertebral subluxations.



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The good news is that chiropractic care relieves neck tension and accompanying pain. For example, in one study, 119 patients enjoyed a 54 percent drop in neck pain and tension after four weeks of chiropractic care (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:307).

One Unit

Chiropractors know that the spine functions as a unit, not as isolated segments strung together. Dysfunction in one area may trigger problems in another location.

For example, misaligned vertebrae in the spine of the midback, which is known as the thoracic region, is linked to neck pain. Research shows that chiropractic adjustments to the midback may alleviate cervical (neck) pain. That's why some doctors may perform adjustments to the entire spine, even if the neck is the only source of discomfort.

One analysis included seven individuals with neck pain: five women and two men who ranged in age from 20 to 33. All subjects received a single chiropractic adjustment to the thoracic region. Researchers measured each subject's cervical range of motion and neck pain at rest and after neck exercises. Measurements were taken before, five minutes after and 48 hours following the chiropractic adjustment.

The authors conclude that the "results demonstrated a clinically significant reduction in pain at rest in subjects with mechanical neck pain immediately and 48 hours following a thoracic manipulation." (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2007;30:312-20.)

Safety

In addition to being effective, research shows that chiropractic adjustments for neck pain are extraordinarily safe — far more so than pain medication. One large-scale, national study performed in England included 19,722 chiropractic patients with neck pain.

Over the course of the study, the pa-

tients received 50,276 cervical spine manipulations. After each adjustment, the researchers assessed each patient for immediate side effects as well as reactions up to one week later. The outcome? No serious adverse side effects were recorded (*Spine* 2008;33:576-7).

Headaches and Migraines

Research shows that neck pain sufferers often also endure migraine and tension-type headaches (*Cephalalgia* 2007;27:793-802). Why? The same vertebral subluxations that cause neck pain are also linked to head pain. Fortunately, scientific studies show that chiropractic care may prevent migraines and headaches.

In one report, researchers divided 127 migraine sufferers into two groups. While 83 patients underwent chiropractic care, the remaining 44 formed a control group that received no chiropractic adjustments. After two months of care, the chiropractic patients reported "statistically significant" improvements in migraine frequency and duration, compared with the control group. The chiropractic cohort also used less medication and had less disability than controls (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:91).

Vertigo and Hearing Loss

Neck pain and tension may also be linked to vertigo and hearing loss.

The two cervical (neck) vertebrae directly beneath the skull are known as C1 and C2. These two bones are chiefly responsible for rotation and flexibility of the head and neck. If these vertebrae become displaced, vertigo and other symptoms such as hearing loss and ringing in the ears (tinnitus) may ensue.

In 259 patients with "well-defined" upper cervical subluxations and vertigo, 15 percent suffered significant hearing loss. In addition, 40 percent experienced loss of hearing in lower frequencies. Of the group, 62 received chiropractic care to correct cervical vertebral subluxations — and enjoyed

dramatic improvements.

"Results indicate that these hearing disorders are reversible... The therapy of choice is chiropractic manipulation of the upper cervical spine," summarize the authors (*HNO* 1994;42:604-13).

TMJ

Pain and muscular tension in the neck and jaw are related to dysfunctions of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ). The TMJ is the joint between the head of the lower jawbone and the temporal bone. Temporomandibular disorder is an acute or chronic inflammation of the TMJ.

One study found that many patients with temporomandibular disorders also had "symptoms of cervical spine disorders, head, neck and shoulder pain, and limitations in [neck] side bending and rotation were also frequent complaints. One-third of these patients could influence tinnitus by jaw movements and 75 percent could trigger vertigo by head or neck movements." (*Prog Brain Res* 2007;166:215-9.)

Chiropractic care eliminates TMJ disorders and accompanying neck pain by realigning cervical and jaw bones.

All-Natural Focus

Chiropractic emphasizes preventive care, which involves warding off health problems before they ensue. Regularly scheduled chiropractic care is a fundamental part of this wellness plan. If you or anyone you know endures neck pain, look to chiropractic care for relief. Pain is the body's way of indicating something amiss. Don't ignore your body. Rather than reaching for painkillers, consult our office to root out the true cause.

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