CHIROPRACTIC Care Clinic
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The Spinal Column

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Meet the Disc Doctors

Dr. Kamerman and Dr. Ward have been treating disc cases so frequently that we sometimes are referred to as the "disc doctors." We hope the article on spinal disc problems is helpful in your understanding of how it comes about and how far-reaching the effects can be. If you ever have any questions or concerns about any form of treatment regarding disc problems, feel free to contact our office or set up a free interview.

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How Serious Are Spinal Disc Disorders

Have you been told you have a spinal disc problem? If so, you are not alone. Here are some facts you need to know and consider:

In the normal adult spine there are 23 spinal discs. All of these 23 discs are subject to both micro and macro trauma.

In addition, spinal discs are highly susceptible to the effects of of vertebral misalignments, subluxations and fixations — which, if prolonged, predispose the affected discs to the ravages of insufficient nutrition — due to impaired imbibition (reduced absorption of fluid.)

But that's not all. Significant congenital anomalies, or developmental defects put the spinal discs at risk by increasing stress on them.

But that's not all. When one disc begins to degenerate or decay, then adjacent discs (and joints) are likely to also become affected with degenerative joint disease.

But that's not all. Disc degeneration triggers and stimulates osteophyte formations (bony spurs) — the development of ankylosis (vertebras grown together) — vertical stenosis (narrowing) of the intervertebral foramen — the development of facet syndrome/subluxation — along with angular compression of the contents of the intervertebral foramen — and, in addition, both central and lateral stenosis (narrowing) — and neurological compromise frequently occurs.

The above cascade effects of of degenerative joint disease require conservative, therapeutic intervention at the earliest possible stage — for the purpose of slowing or preventing the progression of the degenerative process.

The Good News

Fortunately, there is a bright side to this wide-spread health problem. Here's the good news. There's much that chiropractic doctors can do to help slow the degenerative process — and in many cases help to heal injured or diseased discs.

This is accomplished by correcting misalignments, fixations and subluxations, and by restoring as much as possible the normal joint motion and disc imbibition (absorption of fluids).

Long-term management and monitoring is the key to success.

Considering the above hazards, it's small wonder that a high percentage of chiropractic patients suffer from various stages of progressive spinal disc degeneration.

In many instances chiropractic intervention may even help prevent disc disease, and the on-going progressive degeneration that would likely develop in the absence of chiropractic mobilization, manipulation, and adjustment procedures.

Also, chiropractic intervention in disc cases may be very effective in preventing or slowing the spread of disc degeneration from one joint to the next.

During the past 100 years chiropractic practitioners have focused primarily on the skeletal framework of the spine and pelvis. Not enough attention was paid to the soft tissue supportive structures of the spine … especially the discs which function as the major shock absorbing mechanism of the human body.

DR. KRISTY WARD

Recently, the chiropractic profession has been more alert and attentive to the soft tissue components and the supporting structures of the spine.

Special equipment has been invented to help chiropractic doctors better position their disc patients and apply gentle adjustments to their spines.

Also, the development of passive motion devices now make it easier to mobilize fixated or restricted spinal motor units.

Other technological advances have created sophisticated, computerized methods for accurately measuring the relative motion of one vertebral segment compared to neighboring segments.

This process allows chiropractic doctors to identify areas of hyper-mobility (excessive movement) and hypo-mobility (too little movement), and helps pinpoint spinal areas needing treatment.

Such clinical advancements enable chiropractic doctors to help more patients suffering from disc disorders. They do so by increasing intersegmental motion — and thereby increase disc imbibition — and thereby generate increased tissue fluid circulation within the disc — and thereby enhance disc nutrition and repair.

Complications

Disc degeneration has been linked to a host of conditions including whiplash, vibration trauma (often suffered by over-the-road truck drivers), acceleration-deceleration injuries, neck and back injuries, reduced disc imbibition, unlevel pelvis, spondylolisthesis, retrolisthesis, separation of the pars interarticularis, scoliosis, subluxation/fixation complexes, vertebral compression fractures, micro and macro trauma, and vertebral pathological collapse.

Treatment

The information in this article makes it clear that, in the past, many disc problems have been under-diagnosed, under-treated, and under-managed.

Millions of people already have, or are developing, degenerative spinal disc problems which are amenable to chiropractic treatments and methods.

Of course, disc problems are best treated and managed in the early stages — thus saving many patients from the hazards of surgery. But even when surgery is needed, the results are often not fully satisfactory.

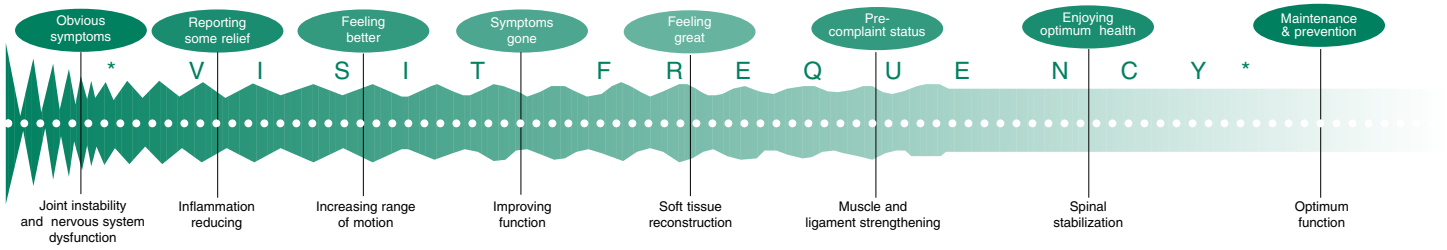
Still, post-surgical cases can often benefit from chiropractic treatment and management. Chiropractic has a long record of successfully treating patients suffering from failed-back surgery.

Conclusion

Dentists know their patients are highly subject to tooth decay — which can often be prevented or treated effectively.

So too, the chiropractic profession needs to make the public more acutely aware that a high percentage of people (at some time in their lives) may become afflicted with spinal disc degeneration — and that chiropractic is highly effective for this condition.

how long will it take?



initial intensive care

This is usually where most patients begin their chiropractic care. Visits can be frequent, depending upon the severity of your condition. The primary focus is to reduce or eliminate your most obvious symptoms.

corrective care

When your ache or pain diminishes, the objective is to stabilize spinal function and promote a more complete healing. Muscles and soft tissues of the spine are strengthened during this stage of care, helping to avoid a relapse.

wellness or elective care

With the maximum restoration of spinal function, many patients enjoy regular chiropractic checkups. This type of preventative or wellness care can save time and money by keeping minor problems from becoming more serious.

Chiropractic results may vary. Some patients enjoy immediate results. Others find that their recovery takes several months, or longer. Children often respond quickly, while adults with longstanding spinal problems heal more slowly. The healing process takes time.

There are three stages of chiropractic care. Periodic progressive examinations help determine the course of your care. Once you understand true health, you may want some type of ongoing chiropractic care. Like brushing your teeth, eating wholesome foods, and other healthy habits, regular chiropractic checkups make sense. How long you decide to benefit from chiropractic care is always up to you.

patient responsibilities

Here are some ways you can help get faster relief and better results from your chiropractic care:

- **get involved.** Patients who get involved and assume personal responsibility for recovering their health often get better results.
- **keep your appointments.** The primary way to achieve the result millions of chiropractic patients have enjoyed is to keep your appointments.
- **strengthen your spine.** Your doctor may suggest specific exercises to help speed your recovery. These can help retrain muscles that support your spine.
- **lift with your legs.** Improper lifting can invite a relapse. Keep your back straight and the load close to your body as you lift with your legs.
- **avoid extreme bending.** Use caution when bending or working overhead. Avoid sudden twists and turns.
- **get adequate rest.** Proper rest is an important aspect of the healing process. Use a mattress that offers firm support, and avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- **watch your diet.** During the healing process proper nutrition is more important than ever.
- **ask questions.** Proper spinal hygiene is new for most people. The better you understand your condition, the faster your recovery.
- **refer others.** Share your chiropractic experience with others. Explain the relationship between proper spinal function and nervous system function — the key to true health.