

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Alan Cranton, DC, ND

The Lesser-Known Effects of Back Pain

Back pain can range from mildly annoying to completely debilitating. Its physical effects make even the simplest of movements — getting in and out of a car, picking up items off the floor or stooping down to pet a dog — unbearable.

And back pain's effects don't stop at physical. It can have serious psychological, and even financial, effects.

How can you end or avoid back pain and its far-reaching effects? Start with chiropractic. When spinal movement is restricted or spinal bones (vertebrae) become misaligned, the result is a common condition known as vertebral subluxation. Vertebral subluxation is linked with a myriad of health concerns, including back pain.

Dr. Cranton corrects vertebral subluxations with safe and gentle maneuvers called chiropractic adjustments. Studies show that regularly scheduled adjustments may also help prevent back pain along with a host of other musculoskeletal conditions.



A French study, published earlier this year, confirms the efficiency of short-term vertebral manipulation for chronic low-back pain (LBP). Researchers separated a cohort of 64 patients into two groups: half received a series of four vertebral manipulations and half underwent “sham” manipulations. “Patients receiving the true manipulations showed significant improvement in pain,” noted the researchers. Even more impressive, pain

symptoms *remained* improved — as evidenced by follow-up testing two months later (*Ann Readapt Med Phys* 2007;Epub).

The group who received the “sham” manipulation, meanwhile, had absolutely **no** perceived change.

It's vital not to self-diagnose the cause of back pain. Instead, see out a full chiropractic evaluation. In addition to vertebral subluxation, back pain may be sparked by a variety of other disorders.

Regardless of its cause, back pain is more than just a physical condition. It can also have a devastating emotional impact. Research shows the widespread psychological effects of back pain extend beyond the patient to encompass families and employers, “in terms of sickness and absence and for society as a whole, in terms of welfare benefits and lost productivity.” (*Br Med J* 2002;325:534.)

That's why Dr. Cranton urges patients to reject the notion that back pain is

“normal” and that nothing can prevent or mediate its physical and psychological effects.

Psychological Consequences

Chronic back-pain sufferers — particularly those afflicted with low-back pain — have an elevated risk of developing depression, anxiety and “high levels of neuroticism.” (*Pain Med* 2006;7:217.)



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Worse yet, these psychological and social factors play a major role in worsening the perception of pain and the development of chronic disability (*Br Med J* 2002;325:534).

Canadian researchers note that “beliefs, attitudes, and recovery expectations appear to influence recovery from back pain.” This conclusion was based on a survey of 2,400 adult sufferers. “Most agreed that back pain makes everything in life worse, will eventually stop one from working, and will become progressively worse with age.” (*Spine* 2006;31:2142-5.)

And the longer back pain is present, the worse things get. A study published earlier this year concluded that “Those whose low-back pain was longer than five years had the highest scores for depression, general complaints and anxiety.” Longer duration of illness was similarly accompanied by even *higher* levels of anxiety, depression and obsessive-compulsive behaviors (*East Mediterr Health J* 2007;13:335).



That’s why chiropractors encourage those with back pain to take immediate action and remain realistic, patient and positive.

As a holistic health-care provider, your doctor of chiropractic believes firmly in the connection between mind, body and spirit.

Work Productivity Effects

Among a cohort of 1,066 patients — 48 percent reporting back pain and 52 percent reporting other forms of mus-

culoskeletal pain — the severity of symptoms was directly associated with time lost from work, disability and utilization of health care (*Ann Fam Med* 2006;4.4:341).

Fortunately, chiropractic care is a recognized, effective, therapeutic option for chronic LBP. Canadian researchers also note that follow-up chiropractic helps keep pain at bay (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2004;27:509-14).

Social Impact

Social participation, subjective happiness and patient satisfaction are “closely correlated” with physical health status, according to Japanese researchers (*Spine* 2003;28:1461-6).

Improving physical health, however — with regularly scheduled chiropractic care — keeps patients of all ages enjoying life.

Shortened Life Span

Chronic back pain can even shorten your life. Among elderly women, daily back pain “is associated with reduced quality of life, mobility and longevity and increased risk of coronary heart events,” concludes a new report in the peer-reviewed medical journal *Spine*.

These findings are from a five-year investigation of 1,484 community-dwelling Australian women, 70 to 85 years of age. “The adverse health effects of chronic back pain deserve greater recognition,” urge the study’s authors (*Spine* 2007;32:2012-18).

Decreased Self-Esteem

Many individuals with chronic back pain also feel stigmatized: that it’s not real or, if it is, it’s their fault. According to a new report, stigmatizing responses by family, friends, health professionals and the general public appear to have a profound impact on perceptions, self-esteem and behavior.

“The findings suggest that patients with chronic back pain feel stigmatized by the time they attend pain clin-

ics and this may affect their attitudes and behaviors towards those offering professional help.” (*Disabil Rehabil* 2007;29:1456-64.)

Such was the case of 30 women in Finland who shared their pre-diagnosis history with researchers. “From the beginning of the early discomfort of back pain, the women were sure of its bodily and subjective reality.” (*Soc Sci Med* 2003;57:1045.)

The researchers were astonished at the disrespectful attitude toward back-pain sufferers. “The moral essence of the women’s common story was the stigmatizing experience when doctors did not take subjective pain seriously. Instead, doctors’ neglectful attitudes became part of the prolonged problem.”

After years of repeated attempts to get help, the women eventually found doctors who took their symptoms seriously. “To be finally diagnosed was a great relief. However, to be taken seriously as a person was considered to be the greatest relief.” (*Soc Sci Med* 2003;57:1045.)

Don’t Suffer in Silence

If you are among the millions of people around the world with back pain, don’t suffer in silence or resort to symptom-masking drugs: many of which have potentially serious side effects. Instead, schedule an appointment with our office today. We take vertebral subluxations and related disorders seriously. Along with freedom from pain, you’ll receive the attention and respect you *deserve*.

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