

The Backbone of Health

By Ryan Beck D.C. QNCP

When we talk about health, the most common components of health that are commonly spoken of include: healthy diet, exercise and lifestyle choices. But the backbone of health is quite often left out of the conversation. Yes, I am referring to your actual backbone, also known as your spine.

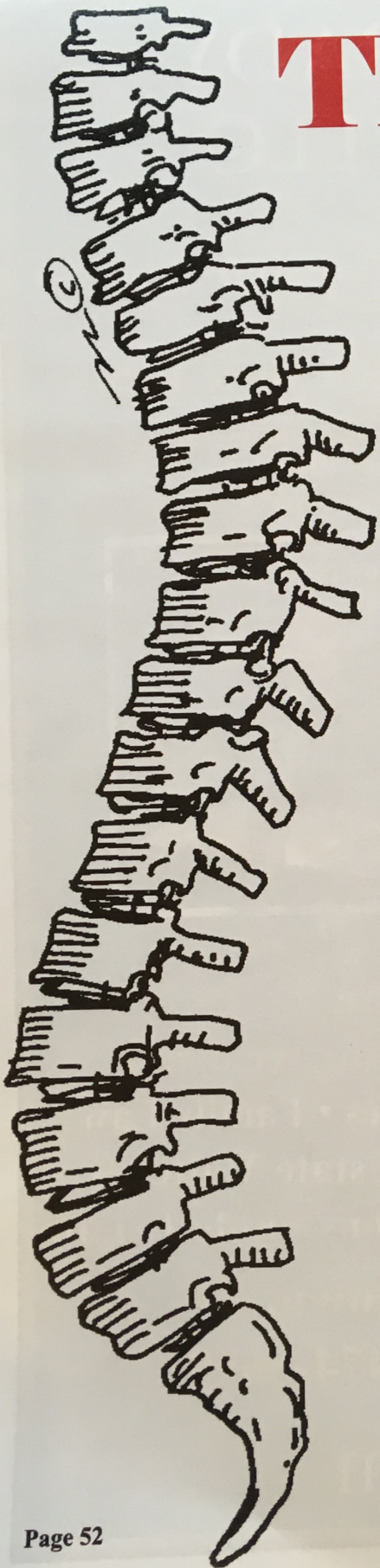
As you may not know, in our family we have 5 CHIROPRACTORS! We are spine enthusiasts. We have spent years studying about the spine and if you were to ask one of us, we get rather excited when we talk about the spine. The functions of the spine are so important to the function of your body, yet we often neglect our spine. We are also guilty of neglecting the amount of water we drink, the amount of healthy food we consume, the amount of physical exercise we get, visiting the doctor and checking our cholesterol and blood pressure levels. So, we are all guilty at times of neglecting our own health, just simply because life gets in the way.

Hopefully after you take a few moments to read this article, you will get excited about taking charge of your own health and you may even get as excited as we do about your own spine. Here is a few little facts about the spine that might interest you...and may help you get a few Jeopardy questions correct.

The spine is a series of vertebra (bones) that run from the skull to the pelvis which house and protect the spinal cord. It is made up of 33 bones- 7 cervical bones (neck), 12 thoracic bones (mid back), 5 lumbar bones (lower back), 5 sacral bones and 4 coccygeal bones (tail bone). Each vertebra is separated by discs which cushion and keep the bones from rubbing together. The spine is also surrounded by many muscles, tendons and ligaments that provide more support and protection.

The spinal cord which is located within the spine is about a foot and a half long and the thickness of a thumb. The spinal cord is the main pathway for information from your brain to your body and your body to your brain. The nerves in your body which control nearly every function run from your brain through the spinal column and exit at different levels. For example, the nerve that supplies the heart runs from the brain and exits the spine around the level of the second thoracic vertebrae. In addition, sensory information is received by your body and sent back to your brain. An example would be placing your hand on a hot stove. The heat touches your hand and a message is sent back to your brain causing you to recoil from the heat.

When any injury occurs to your spine this pathway may be interrupted. Two examples include: spinal misalignment and disc injuries. A misalignment can occur from anything as simple as "sleeping wrong" to something more serious such as a car accident. Misalignment means when a bone has moved from its normal position. A misalignment can cause interference on nerves and lead to symptoms such as pain, numbness, tingling and loss of normal function.



Disc injuries, also known as a bulge or herniation, may lead to what many refer to as a pinched nerve. The disc is made up of two layers, a tough outer layer and an inner gel like layer. When an injury occurs an easy comparison is a jelly donut. When the disc (the donut) is compressed the gooey middle layer (jelly) is squeezed out and can cause pressure on nerves leading to a variety of symptoms including shooting pain, numbness and tingling, burning sensations and loss of normal function.

So, now that you know the basics of the spine you can see why we get excited about the spine. The spine and the spinal cord are VITAL to your life. All the nerves that move your arms and legs travel through the spine. Many of us have a sedentary lifestyle and eat foods that are bad for us. These are things that increase inflammation in our entire body...often it will result in knee pain or hip pain and beneath the surface you will also have inflammation in your spine and in your organs that don't seem to cause pain but are doing a world of damage underneath.

As chiropractors we recommend a healthy lifestyle and we know that a healthy lifestyle is making many choices for that lifestyle daily. Sadly there is not a simple fix...but once you get started it is hard to stop. It is contagious to feel healthy and you will have more energy and be able to enjoy life to the fullest if you make a few more healthy choices today than you did yesterday. Before you know it, you will be stronger, healthier, have more energy, happier and deep down your organs will thank you too.

As chiropractors, we know the value of having your spine checked.

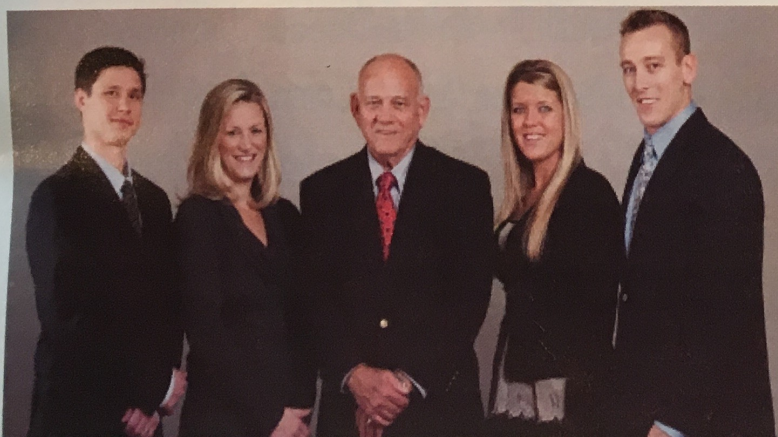
We see results everyday. We have had patients that have been suffering from back pain, neck pain, headaches, shoulder pain, knee pain, and the list goes on. People that have been suffering for years and have not sought out chiropractic care. Many of those patients will begin care and realize that they did not need to suffer for years. Chiropractic care is important to overall health because we value the spine and the spinal cord and know the importance of having a healthy system that helps all the other systems. The backbone of the spine is the foundation of all the other systems. We know the value of knowing your blood pressure, checking your cholesterol levels, having regular pap smears, mammograms, and prostate exams. All those checks and exams are relevant to understanding your overall health. Your body is made up of several systems that are always working together...yet we sometimes neglect the one system that houses all the nerves to the organs and muscles of the body. A chiropractic examination will look at your entire body and we will check your spine for misalignments due to possible disc injury, poor posture, a bad fall, a car accident. Chiropractic adjustments are the fastest, most cost effective and least invasive way to correct spinal misalignments. In our office we treat chiropractic misalignments with a variety of methods. We get excited about helping patients. We are a family that loves taking care of your family. Please review our information at www.beckandblackleychiro.com to learn more about ways you can help your health. We are always glad to help with any questions and offer free consultations.



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