

Healthy Living

Patient Information from the American Chiropractic Association

Find Your Game

“Find Your Game” means achieving optimal function at any level of fitness. That includes everyone from athletes to office workers, young and old. The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) encourages everyone to use the month of October to resolve to be your best, feel your best, and perform your best.

Chiropractic: Athletes’ Not-So-Secret Weapon

Athletes know that chiropractic gets them back on their feet after injury. Doctors of chiropractic (DCs) support athletes in high school, college and in professional sports. DCs work at events such as the Olympic Games, the World Games, the Pan-American Games—wherever they are needed.

Play Through Pain?

Athletes and weekend warriors may try to play through pain, hoping a painful elbow or low back will get better by itself. As a rule of thumb, the earlier a musculoskeletal injury is treated, the sooner healing can begin. An untreated injury can easily slide from “acute” into “sub-acute,” and even into “chronic.” Each phase has its own characteristics and challenges.

Injury Timeline

The acute phase lasts from 48 to 72 hours after injury. This phase is characterized by pain, inflammation, loss of range of motion, increased temperature around the injury and swelling.

An injury can become sub-acute at any point after that period. In this phase, the swelling decreases or disappears altogether and range of motion improves. The sub-acute phase can stretch out for weeks and even months, depending on the severity of the injury and the rehabilitation required. During this phase, the doctor of chiropractic works on flexibility, postural retraining, non-weight-bearing strength/coordination training and pain management. “Many elite athletes spend the better part of their careers in the sub-acute injury phase due to grueling competition



schedules and high demands placed on their bodies. Knowing the phases and what therapies to incorporate during which phase is crucial to recovery. Recuperation takes longer as we age whether you run marathons, spin three times a week or play golf on the weekend,” says Steve Hanson, DC, DACBSP, who specializes in treating sports injuries.

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Doctors of chiropractic are trained to work with musculoskeletal injuries in any phase. Injuries are considered chronic from about two weeks after trauma until recovery. The longer an injury goes untreated, the more likely it is that the brain will accept it as “the new normal.” Therefore, if optimum function for life is the goal, treatment should be sought out sooner, rather than later.

Treat Causes, Not Symptoms

In this culture, we are told that pills are the answer. We pop aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen and other NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) to mask pain—and get back in action. By numbing the pain of an injury, we lose touch with the body's signals. Without a “guardian” in place to keep us from overstressing a body part, we can easily worsen the original injury—and we won't even feel it until the NSAID wears off.

Besides silencing a self-protective dialog with our own bodies, NSAIDs have many documented negative side effects—particularly in the gastrointestinal tract. Perhaps the most important point to keep in mind is that NSAIDs treat only symptoms. They do not heal an injury. Chiropractic, on the other hand, treats causes. When the cause of a musculoskeletal injury is properly treated, healing can begin.



Soft-Tissue Injuries

An increasing number of doctors of chiropractic are getting trained in the specialized techniques of instrument-assisted soft-tissue mobilization (IASTM) to work with musculoskeletal injuries. Stephen Perle, DC, MS, professor of clinical sciences at University of Bridgeport College of Chiropractic, Bridgeport, Connecticut, says the beauty of these instruments is that they allow him to focus the forces of his hands into a smaller area of the patient's body, allowing him to bring about pain relief sooner. IASTM is gaining appreciation and acceptance among athletes and weekend warriors alike as a technique that complements the unique strengths of chiropractic.



For more information on prevention and wellness, or to find a doctor of chiropractic near you, visit ACA's patient education website at www.ChiroHealthy.com

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