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Pain and Dis-Ease [Table of Contents](#) | [Go Top](#)

Patients sometimes ask, “What can you give me to stop this back pain (neck pain, shoulder pain, headache, etc)?” The only honest answer is, “Nothing.”

Chiropractic is a drug-free practice. We have no pain-killers to prescribe for you, no anti-inflammatory shots to offer you, no muscle relaxants to send you home with.

Yet, chiropractic can give you access to all of these medicines because your body already contains all of the information required to manufacture them internally. In most cases, recovery from any painful condition can be accelerated simply by assuring the free and timely flow of this biological information. When there is no obstruction to this information flow, painfully contracted muscles can relax, dangerously lax muscles can contract, repair of injured tissue can proceed at a vigorous pace, and your body’s inner pharmacy can be open for business whenever it is needed. This healthy situation might be described as a state of “ease.” In traditional chiropractic philosophy, obstructed information flow is called, “dis-ease.” (Dis-ease is a more subtle disturbance than disease. Dis-ease can exist without any obvious injury, illness or pathology. Naturally, if certain examination findings suggest that active disease or frank pathology are part of the picture, we will ask you to get medical advice in addition to chiropractic care.)

The chiropractic adjustment is designed to correct subluxation—an important cause of dis-ease. A subluxation is an abnormality of joint positioning or motion, usually in the spine. This malposition or aberrant motion can interfere with normal nerve function, thereby disrupting the free and timely flow of information in the body.

We can’t shut off your pain, but we can adjust your subluxations, a major cause of dis-ease. Without these subluxations, your body will be in a better position to get rid of painful problems on its own. By

correcting subluxations, the chiropractic adjustment makes an important contribution to your body's state of ease.

Breathing the Air [Table of Contents](#) | [Go Top](#)

Patients sometimes ask us what polluted air has to do with spinal health. As most of you know, when we analyze your spine before each adjustment, we are looking for subluxations (also known as “pinched nerves”)—areas where abnormal joint positioning or motion disrupts the flow of information along the nerves. These subluxations can be caused by mechanical trauma, chemical toxicity or emotional stress. Bad air quality can create or aggravate all three of these problems.

Mechanical Trauma: Coughing, sneezing, wheezing, hacking—all sorts of respiratory distress can be caused by breathing air with high levels of pollutants or allergens. This labored breathing places a heavy burden on the respiratory muscles, which include virtually all of the muscles of the chest, neck, abdomen and back. With these major muscles straining, cramping and fatiguing, subluxation becomes much more likely.

Chemical Toxicity: As you continue to breathe polluted air, it becomes increasingly difficult for your body to absorb and utilize oxygen. Since we are designed to burn our nutritional fuel with oxygen—not lead, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, etc.—every cell in the body can potentially be affected. The cells most vulnerable to oxygen deprivation—the brain and nerve cells—frequently begin to dysfunction, causing *bad information* to flow throughout the body. As these neurological *wrong numbers* gain control of the spinal muscles, new subluxations can be created, and old subluxations can be aggravated. This situation further disrupts the body's already-beleaguered information system.

Emotional Stress: If your day is proving to be more *interesting* than necessary, your breathing is already shallow, and your neck and back muscles are already tense. The mechanical and chemical effects of air pollution drive these reactions even further in the direction of stress. Your body's responses to a Code Red or Code Orange day can cause a mild work dispute, a small relationship hassle or a little traffic snarl to turn into an emotional roller coaster. All of this increases your vulnerability to subluxation, which in turn can further distort your *inner landscape*.

Protecting Yourself: All of these problems from breathing bad air! Obviously, some people are more sensitive to air quality changes than others, but all of us are affected to one degree or another. What can we do about it, besides getting adjusted?

Start with limiting your exposure on Code Red and Code Orange days. This is not the time for strenuous outdoor activity. If your eyes are burning, what's happening to your lungs? Close your windows, especially at night, when we tend to naturally breathe more deeply. It's good to sleep with fresh air, but Code Red air is not fresh.

Limit your use of power mowers, leaf blowers, and any other lawn or garden machines which blast dust, plant particles and engine exhaust into the air. Combine your car-oriented errands, so that you personally throw fewer toxins into the atmosphere.

We are all consumers, and many of us are investors. Consider supporting businesses that make good faith attempts to limit and control pollution. In your charitable giving and civic activities, consider supporting private organizations and public initiatives which are working towards a less toxic world. In the long run, protecting your environment is the best way to protect your health.

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1. Sports Injury to the Shoulder Responds to Adjustment of the Neck

Reference: Smith, T.L. Cervical Manipulation for Shoulder Injury. Journal of the Neuromusculoskeletal System, 2000; 8 (1): 24-26.

Synopsis: When a joint injury results from a non-traumatic situation, the health care provider generally investigates what may have made the joint susceptible to injury. In many cases, it turns out that subluxation has interfered with the neurological control of the muscles supporting the joint in question.

In this case study by Dr. Thomas Smith—a chiropractor in private practice in Nebraska—a 16-year-old girl felt her left shoulder suddenly “pop” when she was at bat during a baseball game. For the next four days, she felt pain, weakness and a lack of mobility in that shoulder. At that point, she was brought to Dr. Smith’s office.

During the case history interview, the patient mentioned that her neck had been somewhat sore the day of the shoulder injury. Dr. Smith’s examination uncovered clear evidence of a mid-cervical subluxation, in addition to a left shoulder strain.

After a single adjustment to the dysfunctional segment of the neck, the shoulder was re-examined. Forward motion of the shoulder had improved by more than 40%, while backwards motion had improved by more than 80%. After this, a combination of neck adjustments and shoulder mobilization had the young athlete back to normal within a week.

The nerves from the mid-cervical spine are the major information pathways to the shoulder muscles. Dr. Smith surmises that the patient’s neck problem may have made her shoulder vulnerable to injury, even from such routine activities as swinging a bat.

2. Dizziness, Hearing Loss and Anxiety Respond to Chiropractic Care

Reference: Kessinger, R.C., D.V. Boneva. Vertigo, Tinnitus, and Hearing Loss in the Geriatric Patient. Journal of Manipulative and

Synopsis: The upper segments of the neck house the nerve supply to much of the inner ear, as well as the blood vessels leading to the brain. When subluxation disrupts the normal function of these nerves, all sorts of health problems can result.

In this case reported by Drs. Kessinger and Boneva—chiropractors in private practice in Missouri—a 75-year-old woman came in for a chiropractic evaluation. Several years of dizziness, hearing loss and ringing in the ears had become worse during the five weeks before the chiropractic visit. In addition, the patient had been taking anti-anxiety medication for 27 years.

Chiropractic examination revealed clear evidence of subluxation in the upper portion of the patient's neck. In addition to standard chiropractic examination procedures, Drs. Kessinger and Boneva also tested the patient's hearing at various frequencies. The patients demonstrated hearing loss in general, but particularly at the higher frequencies.

After three and a half months of chiropractic adjustments, the patient stated that she was no longer dizzy, and was not experiencing ringing in the ears. She had stopped taking anti-anxiety medication (of her own volition; not due to chiropractic or medical advice), because she no longer suffered from anxiety attacks. When her hearing was retested, she had improved considerably, including a more than 38% improvement at the higher frequencies.

It is interesting to note that neck pain was not this patient's main complaint, even though her neck problems were apparently severe enough to cause many other health problems.

3. Chiropractic and Reaction Time

Reference: Kelly, D.D., B.A. Murphy, D.P. Backhouse. Use of a Mental Rotation Reaction-Time Paradigm to Measure the Effects of Upper Cervical Adjustments on Cortical Processing: A Pilot Study. Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, 2000; 23: 246-251.

Synopsis: This study was conducted by the relatively new New Zealand School of Chiropractic. Thirty-six chiropractic students who were found to have upper neck subluxations during examination at the school's clinic were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. All participants had their reaction times tested before and after intervention. The intervention for the "treatment" groups was and upper cervical adjustment. The intervention for the "control" group was a brief rest.

The control group demonstrated an 8% improvement in reaction time. The treatment group demonstrated a significantly greater improvement of 14.9%. The researchers conclude that upper cervical subluxation may interfere with reaction time in general, and the

processing of signals in the brain in particular. Correction of the problem via the chiropractic adjustment would tend to improve reaction time.

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