

14, 21, 28 **Open for Saturday hours**
23 **Chiropractic Independence Day**

Note: We are making every effort to provide you with an accurate calendar. However, each newsletter covers a period of four months. Unforeseen circumstances during this time period may require minor changes in the calendar.

FEEDBACK REQUEST: Please share this newsletter with someone unfamiliar with chiropractic. Let us know if they found the articles clear and informative. This type of feedback is of inestimable value in fine-tuning our public education efforts. *Thank you.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS [Go to Top](#)

[**PAIN RELIEF: The Designer Dose**](#)
[**Hot or Cold?**](#)
[**How Did This Happen?**](#)
[**Try Lowering Your Keyboard?**](#)
[**Fender Bender?**](#)
[**Snow!**](#)
[**What Is Chiropractic Independence Day?**](#)
[**Multipacks**](#)
[**Thanks For Your Referrals**](#)

PAIN RELIEF: The Designer Dose
[Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

Most patients come to us initially for pain relief, even though chiropractic care does not include the prescription of pain-killing drugs. In fact, doctors of chiropractic generally recognize that pain as such is not a pathological condition. Pain is nature’s way of elevating your awareness of an at-risk body part, so that you can avoid injuring it, or worsening an injury that’s already there.

Of course, once your pain is sufficient to remind you to protect the body part at risk, further pain can only cause you suffering. It has long been theorized that such unreasonable pain indicates that something has thwarted the body’s natural defenses. An ancient Greek philosophical teaching holds that nature normally keeps pain within reasonable limits: “Pain does not dwell continuously in the flesh. Extreme pain is present but a brief time...”¹ Modern research has confirmed that the body has a complex array of natural defenses against unreasonable pain.

When the nervous system is working to its optimal degree, a collection of natural painkillers is deployed to suppress the pain to just the right degree to enable you to function without totally shutting off the pain “alarm” that protects you from further injury. Some of these internal painkillers are chemically similar to opium, and are called

“endogenous opiates”.² They include the *enkephalins* and *endorphin*. These opiates are stored within tiny packets in certain specialized nerve cells (neurons). They may be released into the blood circulation, or they may be released directly onto a pain-generating neuron. The ability of your body to raise or lower the opiate dose in microscopic increments allows for exquisitely fine moment-to-moment control of your pain levels – just the right “designer dose” to prevent further harm, and just enough relief to reduce your suffering to tolerable levels.

Unfortunately, the same spinal misalignments or restrictions (subluxations) which can cause back pain, neck pain, headaches and the other ailments which bring most patients to a doctor of chiropractic can also create neurological disturbance. In other words, the same subluxation that generates pain may also disturb the circuitry capable of relieving that pain.

While the chiropractic adjustment is intended primarily to speed up the healing of a subluxation, thereby correcting the cause of the pain, there can also be a more immediate effect. Patients sometimes notice a reduction in their pain levels immediately after an adjustment. Injured tissue cannot heal that quickly; therefore, this immediate effect would seem to represent improved function of the patient’s pain-control circuitry. Indeed, there is preliminary research evidence indicating possible enhanced function of the endorphin pain-control system following a chiropractic adjustment.^{3,4}

Of course, many people believe that if a little pain relief is good, more pain relief is better. Now that many drug stores offer “24-7” convenience, it is no surprise that people are attracted to the use of painkilling medication. You barely have to skip a beat in your daily schedule. However, killing your pain is like silencing your smoke alarm. Inadequate levels of pain allow you to unwittingly injure yourself. This can lead to increased dependence on painkilling drugs, in turn leading to further injury; a vicious cycle can be established. This is one of many reasons that it is a good idea to heed the directions on the labels on most painkilling drugs instructing you not to take them for more than ten days at a time without medical supervision.

Pain, like any sensation, has a normal level between extremes. A person in constant pain is unable to function normally. On the other hand, a person who is rendered insensitive to pain is vulnerable to injury. Too much or too little sensory function is abnormal.

While painkilling medication is convenient, and the temporary relief provided by such drugs is often welcome, they can never offer the safety of the designer dose of pain relief provided by your own body. The chiropractic adjustment does not shut off pain. It simply removes interference, so your nervous system can take care of pain relief, tissue repair, and all the other jobs it was designed to do.

References

1. O'Connor E (Translator). *The Essential Epicurus*. Prometheus Books, Buffalo, NY, 1993.
2. Pert C. *Molecules of Emotion*, p 368. Scribner, New York, 1979.
3. Vernon HT, et al. Spinal Manipulation and Beta-Endorphin: A Controlled Study on the Effect of A Spinal Manipulation on Plasma Beta-Endorphin Levels in Normal Males. *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, 1986; 9(2): 115-123.
4. Rosner A. Endocrine Disorders. In Masarsky CS, Todres-Masarsky M (Editors). *Somatovisceral Aspects of Chiropractic: An Evidence-Based Approach*. Churchill Livingstone, New York, 2001.

Hot or Cold? [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

There would seem to be a lot of controversy out there over which to apply when you're in pain, especially in an acute situation. As usual, we find a little common sense goes a long way.

Heat expands things. Try putting on those brand new shoes on the hottest day in August, then walking around the Smithsonian in them for a while! In terms of pain or injury, heat dilates (opens) blood and lymphatic vessels, rushing additional nutrients to the injured area. This is helpful in preventing recently healed injuries from contracting and developing scar tissue. However, rushing all those fluids into a recently injured area creates micro-swelling – not large enough to necessarily be noticed externally, but more than enough to put pressure on an area that is already swollen due to inflammation. *Our vote is to keep the heat off any area that is recently injured or acutely inflamed, since the nerves and joint surfaces are already hot and swollen enough.*

Cold shrinks things. It constricts (closes) blood and lymphatic vessels a little, chasing out the extra fluids that cause swelling. Cold allows pain signals to quiet down (without thwarting the pain altogether), while allowing joints to move more normally without having to work around the additional bulk caused by swelling. *Cold is our choice for a recent injury or acute inflammation.*

When applying ice, always wrap a thin towel or paper towel around the ice pack (or bag of frozen peas, which works great as an ice pack). Don't put the ice pack directly against your skin. Leave it on no more than 20 minutes, and then leave it off for at least two hours. If you have circulatory problems or are on prescription medication, ask the doctor who prescribed that medication or is treating your vascular problem if ice is a good option for you. In most cases, the ice should be temporary, and will help you be more comfortable until you can get in to see us.

How Did This Happen? [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

We readily understand that we may have pain or poor function if we experience physical injuries, such as falls, crashes, or a series of nights in the infamous “900 year old guest bed” while visiting friends or

family. We can even appreciate the possibility that we made a quick, awkward movement, and for some reason our body's innate ability to rapidly repair any such "oops" did not kick in.

What about the times when there was no obvious physical injury, yet we still have a problem? D.D. Palmer, who founded chiropractic in 1895, wrote that subluxations are caused by **trauma, toxins** and **autosuggestion**. In twenty-first century terms, the causes of subluxation are better described as physical injury, pollution and stress.

As stated earlier, it is easy to see how physical injury (trauma) can cause subluxation, leading to pain and poor function. Pollutants (toxins) are more subtle subluxators, because they affect us on the molecular level. If we are breathing in or otherwise ingesting toxins, our bodies' defenses are diverted from their usual functions and forced to deal with the crisis at hand. Our inner biochemical landscape is altered, and many physiological mechanisms may be disrupted, including those that maintain and repair nerves, muscles and joints.

Stress (autosuggestion) invites subluxation on more than one level. On the level of physical injury, stress can make us more accident-prone. It can also lead to the unconscious adoption of abnormal posture. On the biochemical level, stress can act very much like pollution, disrupting our maintenance and repair functions. For example, stress can deplete our adrenal glands, which have a lot to do with maintaining the integrity of our ligaments and tendons.

It would be nice if we could eliminate subluxations altogether, but physical injury, pollution, and stress are probably going to be around for a while. A down-to-earth balance of exercise and rest, good nutrition, and the capacity to laugh now and then will help keep the causes of subluxation at bay. This will be much appreciated by your spine and nervous system. When that isn't quite enough, and your subluxations become symptomatic, remember: our light is on and our door is open for you. In fact, even if you're not symptomatic, think about stopping in periodically to keep your subluxations from getting that way. Prevention and early intervention make sense. Give us a call.

Try Lowering Your Keyboard [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

Spending much time at the computer at home or at work? Are you finding you're frequently sore or stiff in your neck and shoulders?

Try lowering your keyboard. A well-designed work area will keep your shoulders relaxed and your arms at a good height, but many workstations don't allow their users to do so without some adjustment. Kitchen tables, coffee tables, and desks without a keyboard tray, all force you to hunch your shoulders, stressing your upper trapezius muscles (see our newsletter for Sept-Dec 2005) and other upper body structures. Finding a way to lower your keyboard so your arms, hands and shoulders can be at an appropriate level for your height will save your upper body a lot of unnecessary stress. While you're doing that, make sure the seat of your chair is at a comfortable level. If it is too

high, you will find yourself leaning into the monitor and straining your back.

As is so often the case, a few adjustments – in this case of the seat and keyboard – will have most of you feeling much better.

Fender Bender? [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

It's not unusual for a person who has been in a fender bender to dust themselves off, take a breath, see no major damage to themselves or the vehicle and forget about it. That is, until we're halfway through their next adjustment.

While we applaud the self-sufficiency, you do absorb a certain amount of shock when two vehicles of any kind, or a vehicle and a tree or a barrier, meet unexpectedly. Please tell our staff before you come in for your next visit, so we can schedule enough time for you. It may be that the minor stiffness or other symptoms you're experiencing a week after the fact is actually a result of the crash. We may not necessarily need to do a full exam, but for your sake there are a few things we feel it's important to check for you

Snow! [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

We work while it does so. Unless roads are truly impassable or it looks like they will be soon, we will keep our regular hours. If you have a scheduled appointment and have decided to leave work and go straight home or not to leave home at all, please let us know that you will not be here. We can either reschedule you at the time or arrange to do so after the inclement weather stops. If we decide to close unexpectedly, we will call you as long as we have a good number and appropriate contact information for you.

Feel free to stop by the office for a handout on safely and efficiently shoveling snow, or call and Helga or Lisa will send you one.

What Is Chiropractic Independence Day?
[Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

In an effort to make chiropractic care affordable to everyone, we set aside selected Mondays as Chiropractic Independence Days. On Independence Days, there are no set fees. Your decision to seek chiropractic care is *independent* of your insurance or income level. Payment (which goes anonymously into a box at the front counter) is a combination of what you feel the care is worth and your ability to pay. We do accept new patients on Independence Day, depending on time availability, making this an excellent time to introduce a friend, co-worker, or loved one to chiropractic care. It does make sense to make your appointment well in advance, as these time slots fill in quickly.

Multipacks [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

If you want to have your spine checked regularly on an early intervention basis, you may be interested in our six- or twelve-visit packs, or the eighteen-visit family pack. You will save money while

safeguarding your spinal health and mobility. Our staff is happy to answer your questions on these programs.

Thanks For Your Referrals [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of page](#)

We'd like to thank those of you who have been referring family, friends and co-workers. For a health care provider, referral is the sincerest form of flattery.

If your friend or relative is curious to quietly observe as you get adjusted, that's okay with us as long as it's okay with you. If this is inconvenient, our DVD may satisfy their curiosity; it features Dr. Masarsky doing an actual adjustment on the air.

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[Office Hours & Calendar](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Go Top](#)

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