

# VIENNA CHIROPRACTIC NEWS

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## CALENDAR

<b>Jan</b> 3 Reopen for 2024 6,20 Saturdays Open 15 Chiropractic Independence Day	<b>Apr 6, 20</b> Saturdays Open 15 Chiropractic Independence Day
<b>Feb</b> 3, 24 Saturdays Open 26 Chiropractic Independence Day 15-19 + 28 Office Closed	<b>May 11</b> Saturday Open 20 Chiropractic Independence Day 27 Memorial Day: Office Closed
<b>Mar</b> 9 23 Saturdays Open 18 Chiropractic Independence Day	<b><u>STANDARD HOURS OF OPERATION</u></b> <b>M-W-F:</b> 10:00-1:00 & 3:00-6:00 <b>Sat:</b> 9:00-noon (selected Saturdays) <b>Tue/Thu/Sun:</b> Emergencies Only

### LOW BACK PAIN AND THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Even if their cycles are not in and of themselves painful, (Yes, it can happen!) many women find they experience oddly placed general pain and joint instability leading up to and during the first few days. If this has been your experience, it's not your imagination. The changes in hormone levels can and do affect structures. As hormonal levels change, tendons and ligaments loosen. When that happens, joint instability increases. This makes you more vulnerable to strains and sprains at the spinal level as well as in the extremities (hands, feet, knees, wrists). These spinal instabilities can cause vertebral subluxation complexes (VSCs), leading to what some people call "pinched nerves".

The body will usually self-adjust spinal joint instability almost immediately. If that self-adjustment does not happen in a timely manner, the joint locks up to protect itself from excessive motion. This causes the nerves exiting from the spine to become irritated and inflamed by the unaccustomed pressure, causing them to fire abnormally, leading to pain and malfunction. This can be felt as low back pain, but also foot and knee pain, carpal tunnel and headaches.

## **What Can You Do to Help Yourself, Besides Getting Adjusted?**

1. Be even more careful about your nutrition. Stay adequately hydrated and make sure you are getting enough Vitamin C. Your adrenals, which control ligament stability, need Vitamin C (which humans cannot self-produce) to work correctly. B complex and a good calcium/magnesium combination will help calm your nerves. If you are on any sort of medication, please speak with your prescriber to make sure that the vitamins and minerals will not interfere with your medication.
2. If low back pain, knee or foot pain especially are a problem for you, you may want to talk with us about spinal pelvic stabilizers (soft, custom molded orthotics). These will support your arches and that support will subtly stabilize your entire body, taking strain off the ligaments.
3. Move! This may be the last thing you want to do at that time but if you can, do it. It will help keep your muscles balanced and relieve some of the cramping caused by the oddly stimulated muscle fibers. Yes, Kegel exercises count and can in fact help a lot to strengthen your pelvic floor. Obviously, if you don't exercise much throughout the month, this might not be the time to run a mile or do 50 pushups. Be kind to yourself.
4. Speaking of being kind to yourself.... It's not always doable to avoid emotional stress but if you can avoid some of it, this would be the time. Read something you've really been wanting to read, listen to or play music. If you feel you're fit for human company, spend some time talking with a friend. If the human angle doesn't quite suit the moment, spend a little more time with you cat or dog. They're much less demanding. Otherwise, take a mental health day and go to a park.

If each of the above isn't a perfect fix, together, bit by bit, they'll get you through.

### **AFFORDABLE CARE**

In an effort to make chiropractic care affordable to everyone, we offer multipacks and Chiropractic Independence Days. Ask about these programs. Also, see "Returning War Veterans" at the end of the newsletter.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH CLASSES**

As part of our commitment to community education, we offer a series of courses on Thursdays, noon-1:00 pm at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, Vienna. There is no charge. To register, visit the front desk at the Vienna Community Center. To register online, establish an account at <http://www.viennava.gov/webtrac>. For questions about the registration process, call the Vienna Community Center at 703-255-6360. Upcoming:

<i>Building a Better Neck</i>	January 18
<i>Long COVID</i>	February 22
<i>Mouth-Tongue Exercises for Better Sleep</i>	March 21
Breathing Exercises for Better Brain Function	April 18

### **BETRAYED! By Your Recliner**

It's cushy and you get to put your feet up. You've been waiting all day to spend time with it and what does it give you? Low back pain and a neck that will only go so far in any particular direction. Your recliner can't help it. It was designed for kicking back, maybe sleeping in and that's about it. We try to make it our all-encompassing refuge, using it for hours of reading, working on the laptop, and eating. It may be convenient, but it doesn't work well.

At best, the chair has a back straight as a stick and maybe a big fluffy thing at the top that hits most people wrong. Our backs have curves, they're not designed to flatten out and that big pad shoves our heads and necks forward, sort of like an airline seat except you're not going anywhere and no one's kicking you in the back. It does, however, cause the natural curve in your neck to reverse.

So, what are you going to do about it? Negotiate! Meet it part way by placing a large pillow against the back so it can accommodate your spinal curves a little better. Don't use a small one, it'll just push you into an unnatural position as you try to lean on the chair back. The reading, computing and eating thing? Probably best just not to, but that chair is so

inviting! How's this: change position often and put a rolled up towel behind your neck to support it. A cervical pillow would be great except it won't fit and you will probably toss it.

The foot rest? Perfect! Put 'em up, kids, it'll help your back and you've earned it.

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## **How Do Chiropractors Know Which Vertebra to Adjust?**

### ***A Hair Under the Paper***

When we were in chiropractic college, we were encouraged to practice finding a single human hair under a sheet of paper. When that became easy, we were to try two sheets, then three sheets, and so on. The idea of this exercise was to sharpen our sense of touch to enhance our ability to assess our patients.

An examiner's use of the sense of touch to gain clinical information is called palpation. In chiropractic palpation, the examiner is usually searching for significant asymmetries. For example, is there a left-right difference in the tension of the muscle tissue next to a vertebra? Can the chiropractor sense a vertebra resisting movement in a particular direction? Does the skin temperature near the vertebra tell the examiner something of significance?

While different chiropractors use different combinations of assessment techniques, most practitioners incorporate some form of palpation to determine which vertebra to adjust at any particular visit.

### ***Muscle: The Circuitry and the Machine***

Certain muscles are extremely helpful in chiropractic examination because they are controlled by a particular spinal nerve. There are several ways to test muscle function. The simplest and probably most common is to test the ability of the patient to hold a position against the examiner's force. For example, the doctor may ask you to bend your elbow. Then she or he will ask you to resist as they try to straighten it. This tests the biceps muscle in the arm. If your ability to control your biceps on one or both sides is significantly impaired, that would

cause the chiropractor to suspect a mid-cervical problem. This is of course assuming there was no apparent injury in the elbow itself.

While practices differ in their approach, some form of muscle testing is commonly incorporated into the assessment of the patient.

### ***The Sensory Mosaic***

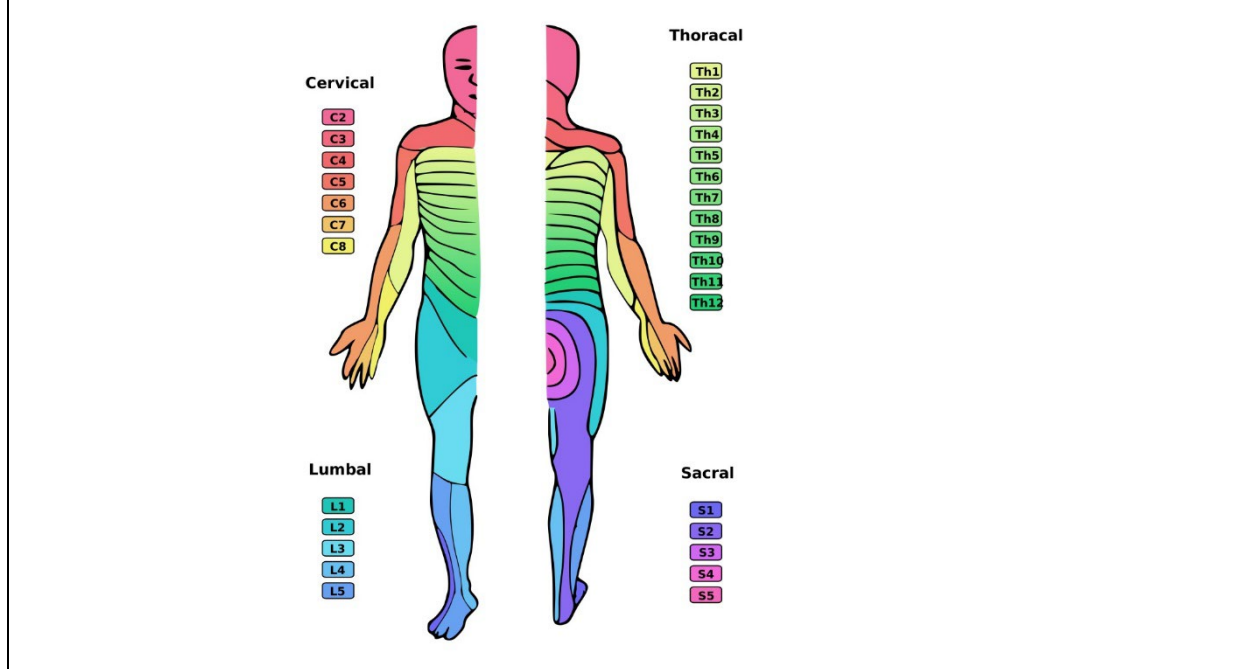
Your skin is loaded with nerve endings that allow you to perceive light touch, deep pressure, heat, cold, and vibration. An area of skin in which these nerve endings are connected to one particular spinal nerve is called a dermatome. A map of the dermatomes resembles a mosaic. (See dermatome map.) Dermatome testing can give a chiropractor information about which vertebral level is distressed. For example, if the patient can feel a small brush moving lightly over the left thumb, but is unable to feel it clearly over the right thumb, the examiner would suspect a problem involving the sixth cervical (neck) vertebra. If the vibration of a tuning fork could be clearly felt on the left small toe, but not the right, the examiner would suspect a problem in the lowest lumbar (low back) vertebra or the sacrum (in the pelvis).

Dermatome testing is sometimes used in the initial examination of a patient, to help establish a baseline so that the outcome of care can be tracked.

### ***It's Not Just About Where It Hurts***

Needless to say, the chiropractor's job would be easy if they could simply thrust on the place you point to when you say, "It hurts right here, Doc." In reality, an examiner can never assume the location of a pain is the location of its cause. Pain can be deceptive and vague. Pain can appear distantly from its cause – a phenomenon known as referred pain. Spinal nerve irritation can be painless, causing numbness, muscle coordination problems, balance difficulty, and other manifestations.

## DERMATOME MAP: AREAS OF SKIN SENSATION CORRESPOND TO SPINAL NERVES



As a result, chiropractors use a wide variety of assessment techniques. Some of these are the hands-on procedures discussed here. Others use various instruments and technologies. While the techniques vary, the purpose is the same: to locate correctible disturbances in the joints – especially the spinal joints – that are causing nerve interference. Chiropractic adjustments are then administered to assist your nervous system in re-establishing wellness.



### RETURNING WAR VETERANS

Have you been deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other active conflict area in the past five years? If so, we'd like to offer you a year's care at no cost to you. All we need to see is a copy of your orders and your ID. Call 703-938-6441 for more information. Thanks, and welcome home.