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Spine & Disc Degeneration

CHIROPRACTIC
Bringing out the Best in you

Spine & Disc Degeneration

In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are only consequences.
—Robert B. Ingersoll

CHIROPRACTIC
Spinal degeneration is like tooth decay in that it is often a painless process.

Your spinal bones begin to deform; your discs swell, then shrink; your ligaments, tendons and muscles begin to harden and weaken; and your entire spinal column loses its balance, flexibility, stability and strength. What is happening? Your spine is degenerating.

In addition to spinal damage, your nerves, body chemistry and internal organs can also be affected. Spinal degeneration leads to less overall ability to adapt to the pressures of life; you lose the spring in your step and the youth in your being; you lose height as your spinal structures shrink.

Loss Of Height

Most people believe they lose height when they get "old." Does that mean that at age 65 you wake up and find yourself shorter? Of course not. The loss of height is silent, slow and gradual, and may begin in your 20's and 30's!

What Causes Spinal Degeneration?

Spinal degeneration is usually caused by years of long-standing vertebral subluxations in your spine. What are vertebral subluxations?

Vertebral Subluxations

Spinal stress often causes the spinal vertebrae to shift from their proper places. The vertebrae become misaligned and irritate the surrounding nerves, bones, discs, ligaments and other soft tissue causing them to age and deteriorate. This condition is called a vertebral subluxation complex (VSC). The VSC is often painless and very common; they are a "hidden epidemic."

Spinal Decay

Spinal degeneration is like tooth decay in that it is often a painless process. By the time a person notices its effects or feels any pain it has been going on for many years!

The Phases Of Degeneration

Your spine degenerates in stages or phases:[1]

- **Degeneration Phase 1**[2]

Often seen up to age 20. Your spine loses its normal balance and its normal curves. Your nerves may be affected and the vital life energy that flows over them is interfered with. Also your joints, discs, nerves and posture are stressed and age more quickly. Surprisingly, there may be no pain other than occasional minor discomfort. Also present may be a slight lessening of energy and slight height loss. Response to spinal care is generally good.

- **Degeneration Phase 2**[3]

Often seen in those ages 20 to 40. In this phase, there is evidence of spinal decay, disc narrowing and bone spurs (deformations); postural changes are much worse. This condition is very common—by age 40, 80% of males and 76% of females exhibit moderate disc degeneration.[4] Spinal canal narrowing or stenosis may occur. This phase is characterized by more common aches and pains, fatigue and a diminished ability to cope with stress. Height continues to decrease. With chiropractic care, significant improvement is possible.

- **Degeneration Phase 3**

Often seen in people ages 40 to 65.[5] Here there are more postural imbalances, increased nerve damage, permanent spinal scar tissue and advanced bone deformation. Physical and/or mental weakness or disability begin. Loss of height and loss of energy continue. With chiropractic care, much reversal is possible.

Chiropractic can reduce, halt and even reverse spinal degeneration.

- **Degeneration Phase 4**

Often seen in those ages 65 and older. Now postural imbalance is severe and motion is limited. There is severe nerve damage and scar tissue and bones may begin to fuse. In this phase we find pain, various degrees of physical or mental disability and continued loss of energy and height. Chiropractic may still help in this phase, giving new life to old bones, offering symptomatic relief and some limited correction as well.[6]

The Chiropractic Approach

It is better to wear out than to rust out.
—Richard Cumberland

Must you passively allow your spine to degenerate? No! Chiropractic can reduce, halt and even reverse spinal degeneration by improving spinal balance and posture and keeping your joints, nerves and discs healthy and strong throughout your lifetime.[7-8] As one researcher writes:

The restoration of motion to a previously [fixated] joint leads to a restoration of normal joint function and physiology.[9]

Further, there is increasing evidence that some spinal degeneration may be reversible.[10] As another researcher has noted:

Correction of a vertebral subluxation can not only attenuate and arrest this degenerative process, but can actually allow the condition to reverse itself.[11]

Prevention

The earlier the degeneration process is identified... the better chance the patient has for its arrest and reversal.[12]

Disc problems often accompany spinal degeneration.

Of course, the best approach to spinal degeneration is to prevent it from occurring in the first place!

This means bringing your children in for periodic spinal checkups to keep them free of the vertebral subluxation complex. Of course, anytime someone experiences a fall, accident or other extreme stress they should have their spine checked by a doctor of chiropractic to make sure that they are subluxation-free.

Stress, including emotional stress, job stress, school stress, family stress and environmental stress, takes its toll on us. For that reason you should have your spine checked periodically for vertebral subluxations that slowly and steadily drain your life of energy, strength and wholeness.

See your chiropractor regularly to keep your spine free from subluxations and free from spinal degeneration.

The sooner chiropractic care is begun, the better.