

VAN DAM CHIROPRACTIC

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CHIROPRACTIC & THE AGING SPINE

Staying Mobile, Strong, and Pain-Free: What Aging Actually Does to the Spine

The spine does not age the way most people imagine. It doesn't suddenly deteriorate after a certain birthday. It is a gradual accumulation of wear, restriction, and compensation that builds across decades, largely invisibly, until something tips the balance and symptoms appear. Disc height decreases slowly as discs lose hydration and resilience. Facet joints develop arthritic changes from years of uneven loading. Ligaments thicken and lose elasticity. Bone density shifts. None of these processes are dramatic in isolation. Together they produce the stiffness, reduced range of motion, and increased pain sensitivity that most people associate with getting older.

The critical distinction is between inevitable aging and aging accelerated by how you've maintained your spine. A spine that has moved well throughout life, received regular care, and avoided prolonged periods of restriction ages differently than one that has been sedentary, repeatedly injured, or ignored. Research is consistent: movement quality across the lifespan is one of the strongest predictors of spinal health in later decades.

What Chiropractic Contributes to Healthy Spinal Aging

Regular chiropractic care for an aging spine does several important things. It maintains segmental mobility in areas prone to stiffening, reducing the uneven load distribution that accelerates facet joint degeneration. It supports the neurological feedback loops that govern balance, coordination, and postural stability,

all of which decline with age and all of which respond positively to spinal care. It addresses the compensatory patterns that develop when one area of the spine stiffens, and adjacent segments take on extra load.



Research published in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics found that older adults receiving regular chiropractic care reported significantly better overall health, greater mobility, and fewer falls compared to age-matched peers not receiving care, with benefits compounding over time.(1) That last detail is worth sitting with. The longer care continued, the greater the benefit. This is not a short-term fix. It is a long-term investment with returns that grow.

The Conversation Worth Having Earlier

The most common mistake people make with spinal aging is waiting until something is significantly wrong before seeking care. By the time pain is significant enough to motivate action, the degenerative changes driving it are often well established. Starting or maintaining regular chiropractic care in your forties and fifties, before degeneration becomes symptomatic, gives your spine a meaningfully better trajectory into your sixties, seventies, and beyond.

Aging is not optional. How the spine ages is, at least in part, a choice.

COLD & FLU SEASON IMMUNITY

What Actually Works

Every autumn the same conversation happens. Stock up on vitamin C. Maybe some zinc. Wash your hands. Hope for the best. That advice is not wrong, but it is incomplete. The immune system isn't a single switch flipped on by one nutrient. It is a complex, layered defense network that depends on sleep quality, nervous system regulation, gut health, stress load, vitamin D status, and a handful of other factors that most seasonal immunity conversations never touch.

Vitamin C matters. So does everything else. People who sail through cold and flu season without getting sick rarely do one thing right. They do several things consistently, and most of them aren't found in the supplement aisle.

The Factors That Actually Move the Needle

Vitamin D is arguably the most important and most common immune nutrient deficiency in the Northern Hemisphere during autumn and winter. As sunlight exposure drops, vitamin D levels follow, and the immune system loses one of its primary regulatory signals. Research published in the British Medical Journal found that vitamin D supplementation significantly reduced the risk of acute respiratory infection, with the greatest benefit seen in those who were most deficient going into the supplementation period.² Getting levels tested in September and supplementing accordingly through winter is one of the highest-leverage immune interventions available.

Sleep is the other factor that dwarfs most supplements. During deep sleep, the immune system produces cytokines, signaling proteins that coordinate immune responses and fight infection. Consistently sleeping less than seven hours per night has been shown to more than triple the risk of developing a cold after viral exposure. No supplement compensates for that deficit. Gut health, stress management, regular movement, and adequate hydration



round out the picture. Each is well documented in the research literature as a meaningful contributor to immune resilience. Together they create conditions where the immune system can do its job without the constant drag of poor lifestyle inputs.

The Role of the Spine

Chiropractic patients have another tool worth using. The nervous system regulates immune function, and spinal restrictions interfere with that regulation in ways that compound over time. Regular adjustments through autumn and winter reduce the neurological stress load that compromises immune efficiency, giving the system the best possible conditions to operate.

HUMOR

Why do trees hate tests?

Because they get stumped by all the questions.

What did the chiropractor say to the spine?

I've got your back.

Why did the calendar blush?

Because it saw May coming and knew all its days were numbered.

What do you call a bear caught in the rain?

A drizzly bear.

DID YOU KNOW?

1. October gets its name from the Latin word 'octo' meaning eight, as it was originally the eighth month in the early Roman calendar before January and February were added.
2. Chronic pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined, making it the single most common reason people seek medical care in the United States.
3. The average person takes approximately 8,000 to 10,000 steps per day, yet research shows that even modest increases in daily walking produce measurable improvements in spinal disc health and overall metabolic function.
4. Vitamin D deficiency affects an estimated one billion people globally, making it the most widespread nutrient deficiency on the planet and one of the most significant drivers of seasonal immune decline.

RESEARCH AND CHIROPRACTIC

There seems to be no end to the conditions that respond to chiropractic care – physical as well as psychological conditions.

That is because chiropractic does not “treat” a particular condition. Chiropractic care “treats” or more accurately “corrects” a serious interference to brain, nervous system and energy function known as the subluxation.

No matter what condition you or a loved one may have, you will always function better when free from subluxations.

*Chiropractors are uniquely trained to locate and correct subluxations. Enjoy this month's cases and
SEE MORE NEXT MONTH.*



Chiropractic vs Muscle Relaxants for Low Back Pain

Most people dealing with a flare of low back pain get handed a prescription for muscle relaxants. It is the path of least resistance in a busy medical system, and it feels like doing something. A randomized clinical trial published in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics (2) compared that approach directly against chiropractic adjustments for patients with sub-acute low back pain and found that chiropractic produced significantly greater reductions in pain and disability than muscle relaxant medication. The chiropractic group also reported fewer side effects, which is not surprising given that muscle relaxants carry a list of them, including drowsiness, dependence risk, and diminishing effectiveness over time. Addressing the mechanical source of the problem rather than chemically suppressing the muscular response produces better outcomes because it treats the right thing. That distinction matters more than most people realize when they are standing at the pharmacy counter.



Chiropractic Care & Degenerative Spinal Disease

Degenerative joint disease of the spine is one of those diagnoses that can feel like a dead end. Imaging shows changes, the doctor mentions arthritis, and the implicit message is that this is just what aging looks like and that management is the best available option. Research published in the Spine Journal (3) suggests the story does not have to end there. A study examining dose-response relationships in chiropractic care for chronic low back pain found that patients with degenerative spinal changes who received chiropractic care reported significantly greater improvements in pain levels, physical function, and quality of life compared to those receiving standard medical management alone. More care produced better outcomes up to a meaningful threshold, suggesting that consistent, ongoing chiropractic care is not just maintenance but active improvement for patients with degenerative conditions. A diagnosis of spinal degeneration is not a reason to stop caring for the spine. It is one of the strongest reasons to start.

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