

ARTHRITIS



Arthritis is the name given to a group of conditions involving damage to the joints of the body. It is the leading cause of disability in people older than fifty-five years. Arthritis can affect any joint of the body, including those of the spine. There are different forms of arthritis; each has a different cause. The most common form, osteoarthritis, is basically the result of wear and tear on the joint, often referred to as "joint degeneration". Other examples of well known arthritides are rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

While pain is often present in advanced arthritis, it is often absent during its development or earlier stages. Studies have shown that osteoarthritis advanced enough to be visible on x-rays is present in 10% of 10 to 24 year-olds! The absence of pain does not mean that there is no arthritis.

Numerous studies and scientific articles by world leaders in biomechanics have shown that proper movement between vertebrae is essential for joint and disc nutrition. Lack of proper alignment and motion in the spine or any other joint results in osteoarthritis. It has even been shown that the lack of motion caused by a subluxation of the spine will cause arthritic damage within one week, even in the absence of symptoms! Because chiropractic adjustments restore symmetry, range of motion and movement in the spine and other joints, it can stop or slow down the process of degeneration. A study by Dr. O.J. Ressel even showed reversal of osteoarthritis with proper chiropractic care!

But what about the pain of arthritis? Although prevention is best, it is most often the pain that motivates a patient to seek help. How successful is chiropractic in providing relief? A study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in 1999 has found that seventy-three percent of patients who had tried chiropractic care found it to be helpful. The study also found that 63% of people who visited a rheumatologist for osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia conditions also sought some form of "complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)", chiropractic being the most popular. It was also refreshing to see that 71% of the rheumatologists said it was OK for their patients to use CAM.

Whether you would like to prevent future problems of arthritis or find relief from it, having a chiropractor on your health care team is a great idea!

Dr. Liana Harper and Dr. Pierre Gaulin are in private practice in Coaldale, and are the proud parents of two healthy children. They can be reached at

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Disclaimer: The above represents the opinion of the authors, based on extensive research and years of clinical practice. It is not intended for self-diagnosis and treatment. Please consult a health care professional as your specific condition might require different recommendations.