

GOT STRESS?

Of all the things that many of our patients, friends and family members have in common, being stressed is probably the one we encounter the most. People's lives are so busy, schedules fast and furious, and people have so many professional, familial and personal concerns that it is hard to stay stress-free nowadays. It is now widely known that stress contributes to the leading causes of disease and death in our society. Heart disease, cancer, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, depression and anxiety are all related to stress!

You see, when faced with a dangerous situation - as in facing a tiger for example - the normal reaction of your body is to increase heart rate and blood pressure, redirect blood flow from the internal organs to the muscles, dilate your pupils, and give a rush of adrenaline that can save your life - it is a normal reaction. The problem is that with today's lifestyle, the daily, relentless chronic stress puts this "normal stress reaction" in your body on a permanent basis, and that is NOT good! Your body perceives this as a dangerous situation and starts chronically elevating your blood pressure, squeezing adrenaline and cortisol out of your adrenal glands, and loses sight of its main job: keeping

your internal environment in harmony! This in turn damages your cells, heart, blood vessels, etc.

What if there was a way to measure the effect of chronic stress on the body? There is! Scientists can measure the level of cortisol in your body (usually salivary cortisol) which is a by-product of stress. New, ground-breaking research funded by the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research demonstrated a significant decrease (6.2 to 4.6 mg/dL) in salivary cortisol after 14 weeks of chiropractic care. YES! Chiropractic actually decreased the effects of chronic stress on the body. The same study also showed an increase in Immunoglobulin A, which means better immune function!

Another recent ground-breaking study published in the Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research, measured the capacity of the body to repair the damage inflicted by stress. Scientists consider serum thiols to be a proper measure of human health status, and provide an estimate of DNA repair enzyme activity. These in turn correlate to lifespan and aging. The highest thiol levels were found in the long-term chiropractic patients. In fact, long-term chiropractic care was shown to re-establish a normal physiological state (corresponding to optimal wellness) independent of age, sex, or nutritional supplements! WOW!

Dr. Christopher Kent, one of the authors explained, "Going through life, we experience physical, chemical, and emotional stress. These stresses affect the function of the nervous system. We hypothesized that these disturbances in nerve function could affect oxidative stress and DNA repair on a cellular level."

"Oxidative stress, metabolically generating free radicals, is now a broadly accepted theory of how we age and develop disease," Kent continued. "Oxidative stress results in DNA damage, and inhibits DNA repair. DNA repair is the mechanism which fixes the damage caused by environmental impact." Chiropractors apply spinal adjustments to correct disturbances of nerve function. "Chiropractic care appears to improve the ability of the body to adapt to stress," continued Kent.

If you have been under a lot of stress and your health is not at its best, maybe it's time for a chiropractic check-up.

If you are a regular chiropractic patient and have been for a long time, congratulations! We commend you our commitment to your health.

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

Harper Chiropractic Health Centre at 345-2266

or their website at

www.harperchiro.ca

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.