

SHOULDER PAIN



The shoulder is the most mobile joint in the human body. That mobility is very useful but it also comes with a price: it is also our most unstable joint. When things start going wrong with the shoulder, it can be quite confusing to diagnose, and can take a long time to get better.

Many different parts of the body can be involved in shoulder pain: the joint capsule, bursa, bones, ligaments and muscles, ribs, spine and nerves. The causes of shoulder and arm pain include tendonitis, bursitis, arthritis, muscle spasm and spinal subluxations. Subluxations occur when bones in the spine become slightly misaligned and cause interference to the nerves going to different body parts, in this case the shoulder. The

importance of subluxations cannot be over-stressed: In a 1997 study published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, the authors stated that **“functional disorders in the cervical spine, the higher thoracic spine and the adjoining ribs are not extrinsic causes of shoulder complaints, but an integral part of the intrinsic causes of shoulder complaints”**. It is thus of primary importance that the spine and ribs be checked for subluxations.

Shoulder pain can also be caused by problems with the internal organs such as the stomach, liver, heart, gall bladder or lungs, thus the importance of an accurate diagnosis.

What can a chiropractor do? A good chiropractor will take a thorough history of your complaint through a detailed consultation, examine you and conduct diagnostic tests to determine exactly what is causing your shoulder or arm pain. He or she will detect if subluxations are present in your spine. If necessary, X-rays of the spine and shoulder will be performed. Surface electromyography can also be useful in certain cases. Because the causes and the seriousness of different conditions are so varied, it is important to pinpoint the cause and begin the most appropriate treatment. A broken bone cannot be treated in the same manner as bursitis or tendonitis. Arthritis and gout call for different care than pain originating in nerves supplying the shoulder and arm. Your chiropractor will decide which treatment will be best for you and if referral to a specialist will be necessary. A chiropractor is the only spinal specialist in the detection and correction of spinal subluxations. Sometimes treatment will be directed to several body areas as many different factors, acting alone or in combination, could be the cause. Please call if you have any questions or would like to schedule a consultation.

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.