

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BE ADJUSTED?

By Dr. Derek Conte

A big question out there for would-be chiropractic patients is, 'How often should I be adjusted?' As with many things in life, the answer varies with the needs of the individual patient.

The purpose of the chiropractic adjustment is to restore normal nerve behavior by adjusting (correcting) the spinal column to normal position and motion. When this is done, the nerve is relieved of interference and can now carry accurate messages back and forth between the brain and every muscle, organ and gland in the body, including the five senses. Chiropractors also adjust the extremities, like the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, ankles and feet.

The goal is to achieve good alignment, balance, motion and neurological function, and to keep it there long enough for the patient's body to heal. After only one or two adjustments a patient may feel a great reduction in pain but may not "hold the adjustment" because the alignment is lost between visits. A patient is said to be "holding" when we see a good, symmetrical posture, equal leg lengths and equal weight distribution taken on bi-lateral scales,



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among other things. This may take a week or weeks to achieve. If the structure fails soon after the adjustment and care is interrupted or discontinued, the original symptoms soon return, driving the patient back into the office and a yo-yo effect ensues. Long-term benefit is harder to realize in these scenarios, but once the patient begins to "hold" his adjustments, his visits should be spaced out more and more, over time, so the body can do its real repair work. Patient commitment, not surprisingly, is vital to the best results.

After an initial consultation, exam and adjustment, the patient is seen again in three days for an important follow-up visit. If the patient is "holding," they are seen again in a week, then in ten days, two weeks, three weeks, and then in a month. The point is to gradually build the body up again around a stable foundation. Some patients can reach monthly visits in as little as five visits and eventually "hold" for as long as three months or more. Healthier people and kids are like this. Others may take 12-20 visits to achieve that goal.

There are cases, of course, that vary from the norm, such as auto accidents, where visits are more concentrated early, or in chronic conditions like arthritis, which generally benefit from regular adjustments spaced out over greater time. But the patient should not be adjusted often if they are "holding" their adjustments as this can be counterproductive to recovery and not respectful of the healing process. It is better to have recovery in fewer adjustments. The key to this is adjusting only the "right" things, not "every thing"! As a great theatre director once told me: "Less is More".

Dr. Derek Conte is founder of Chiropractic Specialists on Concord Rd. in Smyrna and is available to speak to your group on his recent journey to Tibet. (404-784-6008)

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