

MOTION AND ALIGNMENT

By Dr. Derek Conte

You're driving at 75 miles per hour and you feel the car begin to shake rapidly; the body shakes, the steering wheel shakes, even you shake. Why? It is likely your tires are not properly balanced. Even displacement of a fraction of an ounce in the tire can cause this annoying phenomenon, reducing the enjoyment of your ride and resulting in decreased efficiency. We tend to take care of these things in our cars when we notice them, because we understand the value in regular maintenance of a very large investment and the importance of safety for our families.

Why then, do we ignore the maintenance of the most valuable things we will ever possess in our lives: the wellness of our families' bodies? Any system which moves must have balance and alignment based on the function which it performs. If not, the system cannot perform efficiently and will tend to wear out much more rapidly than it should. Think of a football spinning in the air, or a lawnmower blade, or a saw: any lack of balance or alignment in their structure will cause a wobble or worse, a catastrophic functional or structural failure.

The analogy of the human frame is more complex, but is well understood. Consider the simple act of standing still (remember, it takes a baby months to learn to stand and longer to walk, even with that big computer which we call a brain). Many muscles fire, very slightly, at the command of the brain, like stabilizer jets on a spaceship to maintain a steady orientation in three-dimensional space. The joints must stack properly on each other for support and when we decide to move, the muscles con-

tract, pulling on the bones and changing the angles of the joints in a particular order as determined by the brain for whatever movement is required at the moment.

For an athlete, the speed, frequency, intensity, duration and complexity of the movements are exponentially greater and proper alignment of the frame is crucial to performance. Science has shown that a misalignment of joints produces muscle weakness and loss of power. Movement of misaligned joints over years results in a degenerative condition that is well known: Osteoarthritis. While osteoarthritis will arise faster in athletes it is also common in the general population, leading to great physical pain and, all too often, joint replacement. Though help can be found to restore misalignments and slow or arrest the progress of osteoarthritis, it is always best to maintain alignment while you are healthy, especially in childhood years when misalignments due to falls are frequent. It just makes sense.

How can we tell if we are out of alignment? Look for pain in a specific area of the body or brief loss of balance or lack of power or focus, decreased performance, putting more weight on one leg, standing with a high shoulder or tilted head or even getting sick more frequently. Chiropractic care is the principal and least expensive way to correct misalignments at any age. Most people spend a lot more money on their cars than on their health and longevity. Isn't it time to change that pattern? Contact a chiropractor near you today for an evaluation.

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