

# Adjusting the Extremities

By Dr. Derek Conte

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For no apparent reason you discover that you can't move your arm freely over your head or lift something that was easy to lift yesterday..."hmmm, (you say to yourself) all I did was bump my shoulder the day before". Remember the time you couldn't take a deep, satisfying breath or reach for something because of this terrible sharp pinching pain just to the side of your spine? Maybe you fell on to your knee going up the stairs two weeks ago but there is still pain long after the bruising is gone? You go to your primary care physician who finds no sprain, strain or fracture and he refers you to an orthopedist, who x-rays the area and finds the joint structurally sound and, because you still have real pain and weakness, writes a prescription for an anti-inflammatory and 4 weeks of physical therapy (all reasonable things to do from the medical POV). This may have helped, but things "just aren't quite right" with the shoulder or knee or ankle...or hip...or wrist...or rib. What could be the problem if there are no strains, sprains or fractures? What can you do? Take pills and avoid painful activities forevermore? The answer is, "No".

The 'extremities'(arms, legs, or anything outside the axial spine) are very sensitive to even subtle misalignments, and when misaligned, can cause great amounts of pain and weakness even though there is no damage to the joint or surrounding tissues. The reason for this is that the body is wired in such a way that misalignments can cause pain; and pain causes a cancellation of strength to the muscles surrounding the involved joint. This has been scientifically demonstrated.....even when the area of skin over a diseased organ is touched, there is an immediate cancellation of strength in the tested muscle group (validating muscle-testing as an assessment tool).

So, how can your chiropractor help you with these problems? Chiropractors routinely deal with very subtle, low-threshold misalignments that don't register as medical injuries and can appreciate how a very small problem can seem very big to the patient. Simply ask him if he does extremity adjusting and, if he does, he will evaluate the problem joint or joints with palpation, range of motion, joint integrity, and muscle tests. He will determine which joint is involved, how the misalignment occurred and, most importantly, in WHICH direction the joint should be adjusted to restore its normal alignment. These tests take a minute or two and the adjustment takes only a split second. Usually, you will feel an immediate lessening of the pain and return of strength to normal levels. Patients are often amazed at the result. An undiagnosed extremity misalignment is like a stone in one's shoe----- very small, but potentially debilitating.

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