

Home Care

When you have an injury

- Try not to sleep on your stomach as this places extra strain on the joints and muscles of the spine and pelvis. Sleep on your side with one or both knees slightly bent, or on your back. You can then place a pillow under your knees to relieve any extra strain on your back. Try to sleep in a firm bed. To get out of bed, turn on to one side (your body will tell you which one is best!), push yourself into a sitting position, swing your knees off the bed, place feet onto floor and then stand up – keep your back straight!
- Ideally, you should use a supportive neck pillow while sleeping. An alternative is to roll a towel up and place it in your pillowcase on top of your pillow. This roll acts as a support for the curve of your neck. Ask your chiropractor for a demonstration of this. The number of pillows you use depends on the shape of your neck. You should wake feeling refreshed with no stiffness in your neck (normally!). If you don't, you may need to alter the type or number of pillows you use.
- When lifting heavy objects, bring objects close to you and try to use your legs to lift. Squat down, using your knees and strong leg muscles, not your back when lifting.
- Try not to carry heavy bags, alternate sides on which you carry them, or use a trolley.
- Try not to stand for long periods or with your knees 'locked' back. If you need to stand, try to keep one foot on a low step or stool – this will relieve backache.
- Try not to cross your legs at the knees – as well as putting strain on your circulation this also stresses your lower back.
- Avoid soft seats or sofas – sit on something with a little bit of support.
- When putting on your shoes, socks, underwear or pants, sit down or lean against a wall to remove unnecessary strain from your low back.
- A soft collar can encourage your neck muscles to be lazy. Ask your chiropractor if the use of a soft collar is necessary in your particular case. Unless you have instability in your neck – a fracture or a sprain, these are generally unnecessary. Remember that as much as it may be uncomfortable, with simple mechanical problems of the spine, movement needs to be maintained.
- Do not drive your car!!!! This may seem obvious, but if you can't move without discomfort then you are endangering yourself and others when behind the wheel. You won't be able to move freely or react properly in an emergency.

The use of ice and heat

Your chiropractor will tell you if the use of heat or ice is appropriate to your case.

Ice is a wonderful anti-inflammatory aid. If used correctly, it has very few side effects! A bag of frozen peas works just as well as a commercial cold pack. Wrap the pack with a towel to avoid burning your skin. Place the icepack over any areas of heat (inflammation) or where you have been adjusted and leave it for 10 minutes. Remove for 10 minutes and then reapply for another 10 minutes. This process can be repeated throughout the day as necessary.

Heat is excellent for reducing muscle soreness, but be careful not to apply it over areas of heat (or inflammation). Like the ice, you need to wrap your hot-water-bottle or heat pack before you apply it to your skin to avoid burning yourself. You can then apply it for 10 – 20 minutes as long as you are comfortable.

If either method produces discomfort please stop application immediately and talk to your chiropractor for further advice.

As much as you can, avoid rubbing, poking or probing your symptomatic areas or where you have been adjusted. This can aggravate the problem and stir up any areas of inflammation.

Water

70% of our body is water! For our body to function correctly, **we need 3 pints of water every day... it's recommended to help flush our body's waste you need to drink 4-5 pints of water daily!!!!** Our bodies can survive for about 5 weeks without food, but only 2 days without water. When you feel 'rough' or lacklustre in the mornings, it is quite often your body's cry for water rather than food.

By the time you feel thirsty, you are already very dehydrated.

Most people are in a constant state of dehydration which has been linked with reduced energy levels, poor skin (including acne and eczema), headaches, constipation, decreased immunity and reduced ability for clear thinking and decision making. Studies have shown that children who do not drink water in the morning score lower on average in exams and tests than those who were given water.

If there is insufficient water in the body, it will retain whatever water there is available (which is why some people have bloating or water retention problems!). Only when there is enough water in the system again will it let go of the fluid (and stored toxins!) that it was saving.

Water helps digest food and eliminate waste more efficiently. It helps to eliminate toxins and poisons such as nicotine and caffeine, pollution and drugs. If there is not enough water in our body, it seals any toxins within our cells and fat. Constipation is often the result of dehydration as there is insufficient water in our bowels to soften stools.

Anything which is not pure water (such as alcohol, tea, coffee and carbonated drinks) is recognised by the body as food and processed in a different way to water. Drinks containing caffeine such as tea, coffee or cola drinks actually flush water out of our bodies! **Always remember that for every non-water drink you take, equal it with a glass of water to ensure you are not getting dehydrated.** Even hangovers are caused by dehydration as alcohol flushes water out of our bodies.

Carbonated drinks (including sparkling water!) contain a certain amount of salts (sometimes labelled as 'mineral salts'). Any form of salt may increase our blood-pressure and makes us retain water. Mineral salts in our food and drinks have been linked with the formation of kidney, bladder and gall-stones. These drinks have also been shown to cause calcium to 'leak' from our skeleton and may be linked with Osteoporosis.

The two centres of the brain that control appetite and thirst are very closely linked. You may therefore think you are hungry when your body is simply asking for water. Try having a glass of water first then check if you are still feeling hungry.

In-flight dehydration is one of the most serious hazards of long-distance flying. Drink at least a glass of water every hour that you are travelling. When you arrive, take a bath or dip in the pool to help your body re-hydrate.

If you are drinking enough water you will have very pale or 'straw coloured' urine. Please note that some medications and food can change the colour of your urine – if in doubt.....ask!