



Kids Our Family Newsletter first

Imagine Chiropractic
Dr. Jill M. Braaten
750 1st St S., Ste 103, Waite Park MN 56387
320-240-6561 www.imaginechiro.com

Our goal is to inspire you, to provide you with the latest health care options available, make you smile, and help you to help us fulfill our mission – *to reach as many parents and children as we can!*

Last month I talked to you about Asthma; what it is, how Medicine deals with its symptoms, and how Chiropractic can offer patients an alternative to drugs and medications.

This month I am going to discuss an issue which affects almost everyone on the planet – and it starts in children:

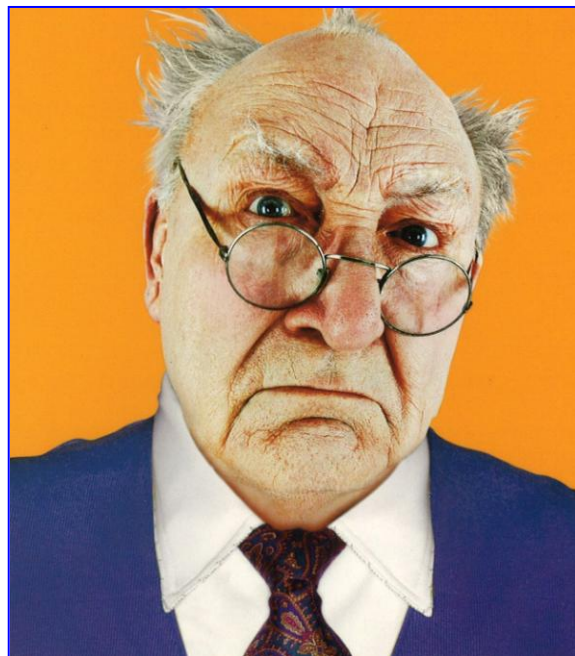


Arthritis, Disc, and Spinal Degeneration:

You are probably wondering why I would discuss this issue in a newsletter which is primarily directed at children's health. The sad reality is that we, as chiropractors, all see a large number of children with the beginnings of arthritis. Some of these children are very young—six, seven, and ten years old. This is actually a huge problem – it seems to be downplayed by society and our health care machine when it concerns children. No one wants to talk about it!

There are many different types of arthritis. When I mention this subject, most people automatically receive a picture in their mind of their grandmother or an older adult sitting in a rocking chair with a blanket on their knees, their hands gnarled and deformed, being unable to move or walk. This is not the type of arthritis I am referring to. I am describing osteoarthritis, most often touted as a “wear-and-tear” type phenomenon that for years has been associated with aging. I am going to share some statistics and data with you so that you can be the judge of how correct our thinking has been and whether it is time to slay some of our “sacred cows.”

You may not realize this, but of all the illnesses that plague Mankind, this type of arthritis is the most widespread. That is huge! Research indicates that it can be detected in 35 percent of population by age



thirty. And my experience, and that of my colleagues, tells me that this number should be closer to 70 percent. I have most likely already told you that you have it, and it is the reason you are seeing me!



By the time someone is seventy- years old, this condition seems to be absolutely universal. In other words, almost every seventy-year-old on the face of the planet has it. A research study by Lawrence a few years ago revealed that osteoarthritis can be noted on an x-ray in 10 percent of fifteen-year-olds (Although from my experience with children, and from the experience of other chiropractors, that figure should be closer to 50% to be more accurate.)

Let me translate that statistic for you: This means that five out of every ten fifteen-year-olds have arthritis of the spine already beginning. Did you know that? Were you aware that this condition is so prevalent? It is a condition which is the most frequent cause of aches and pains in people and can result in the most significant time lost from work. It has been regarded as a problem with no apparent solution for decades!

Osteoarthritis and Spinal Degeneration have been characterized clinically by pain, deformity, limitation of movement and eventually, by disability. Any notion or thought even remotely associated with slowing it down, stopping it, or most certainly, reversing this condition, has been looked upon, until recently, as absolute "heresy." It has been universally accepted as a simple and inescapable part of aging. If

you think about this from a logical perspective, however, and if that **was** the case, then why is it showing up in children who are five, six, seven or ten years old? I will answer this question a little bit later.

You have most likely heard that arthritis is a "wear and tear" degeneration of some of the structures of a joint. Something you may not be aware of is that joints in your body are areas where two bones come together for the purpose of movement.



The ends of these bones are lined with a very special material called cartilage, which is designed in such a way as to prevent friction. This results in movement that is very smooth, not painful, etc. As a matter of fact, the surface of the

cartilage that lines your joints is so perfect, as to be almost frictionless. I want to also remind you that it is also a self-regenerating mechanism - cartilage has the ability to regenerate. The whole joint is then bathed continuously in a special lubricating fluid called synovial fluid, which acts much like a lubricant.

Although I am speaking of the large joints of the body, such as the elbow, or knee, or hip, etc., the same applies for the smaller joints such as your fingers and the vertebrae that make up your spine. This lubricating system is near perfect—it is designed not to wear out. And yet we see that it actually does! Why would that be?

Essentially, Osteoarthritis and Spinal Degeneration are an enormous, self-contained remodeling process. That is the key to understanding what I am about to explain next. It is, in essence, your own body attempting to repair something that has been damaged or changed, or is under undue pressure and is not functioning as it was designed - a spinal vertebra that is under tremendous stress and is beginning to "wear down" because of that particular stress. When I am speaking of stress here, I am not referring to psychological stress.

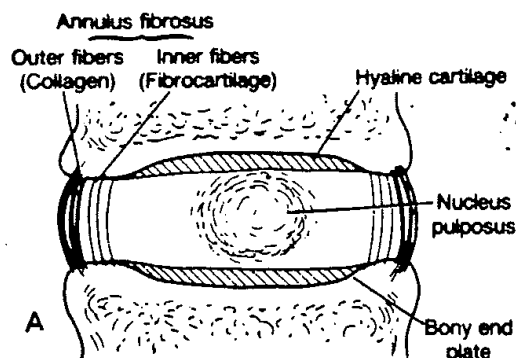
I am referring to physical stress on a particular joint or vertebrae.

The initiating and common denominator in this process of deterioration, which is what Osteoarthritis is, is simply an alteration or change in the, what we call, normal bio-mechanical pattern of movement of some of the vertebrae of the spine. (Ok....I have to use a bit of techno-babble here. Please allow me to do that) In other words, there is a change in the function of some of the individual vertebrae. They are no longer functioning and working as they were designed. This change is not seen as something normal. It is what we call a patho-bio-mechanical change — an alteration in normal movement and function — and even alignment! This is what causes abnormal stress on a particular vertebra and disc.



What I am referring to here is an example of a *Vertebral Subluxation*. This can be seen as either a “misalignment” or a change in normal function. The result is that there is considerable “splintering” and fracturing of the cartilage and the production of what is referred to as “micro-fractures” of the cartilage itself — it becomes weak and no longer frictionless. That is a problem.

Let’s look at two vertebrae in your spine: they are separated by a disc which is composed of two parts — a very tough outer shell called the Annulus, and a much softer jelly center that is held in the shape of a ball bearing. And that jelly center, called the Nucleus Pulposus, is what supports you and allows you to move in so many different complicated directions.



The disc is so tough that is virtually impossible to damage it, **unless** the two vertebrae above or below it have been subluxated for years and have damaged it over time. In that case, the disc also undergoes a number of changes. It tends to decrease in size and fissures form in its material. This tends to lead to instability and a loss of compressibility — the disc no longer does what it is designed to do. As a result, the normal body’s repair mechanism is called into play in an attempt to stabilize an area that is unstable. And we see the formation of calcium deposits, bone spurs, etc. These are seen as buttressing and reinforcing mechanisms in order to aid stability. Osteoarthritis is now no longer seen in terms of an actual disease; it is viewed upon as your own body attempting to repair an area of your spine that is unstable.

This process can be likened to a snowball rolling down a hill, and gathering not only speed and momentum, but also size and weight.

The process of Spinal Degeneration can be broken down into four very distinct stages or phases that tend to blend together into a continuous progressive condition.

Let me illustrate what I mean: I am going to use the cervical spine, or neck, as an example only because it is much easier to see on x-ray than any other part of the spine (The same process, however, takes place in the lumbar spine). There are a number of characteristics of a normal neck or cervical spine that one can see on a side-view x-ray (lateral view). There are seven vertebrae all arranged in a beautiful synchronized curvature. If I draw a beautiful line across the front of each vertebra with a radius of

17cm, which is normal, each vertebra should touch this normal cervical arc. The spaces between the vertebra, indicating the disc, are even, and the edges of the vertebrae are likewise. The corners of the vertebrae are round and smooth and there are no calcium deposits. The openings between the vertebrae where the



nerves exit from the spinal cord are also very smooth, round, and regular in shape. This is an example of normal. There are no exceptions!

PHASE I:

Phase one is seen as the earliest evidence of Osteoarthritis and Degeneration. It is characterized mainly by instability of some of the vertebrae, which then causes weakness throughout the whole area.



There is also evidence that there are obvious Vertebral Subluxations present. As well, the curvature of the spine in that area is either lost or actually reversed.

PHASE II:

This phase is characterized by x-ray evidence that the discs between the vertebrae are actually smaller than they should be. In other words, the discs are beginning to deteriorate. The edges of the vertebrae are now roughened and we actually begin to see the beginnings of calcium deposits. As well, there is also evidence that the vertebral subluxations



have increased in severity. The openings that allow the nerves to pass through from the spinal cord are beginning to be roughened and smaller than they normally should be. This is a problem.

PHASE III:



This phase is much more serious and is characterized by advanced and massive calcium deposits, spur formation, the collapse of most of the discs, the onset of deformity of some of the vertebrae, and the beginnings of fusion—not a good thing!

PHASE IV:

This last phase is characterized by total loss of form and function of the spine and the vertebrae in that area. There is evidence of bone deformation and total fusion, as well as calcification of most of the spinal ligaments that hold the vertebrae together.



Phase IV is irreparable.

I know this is very technical and I would be very happy to chat with you on a one-to-one. Please ask me and I'll be happy to explain it to you in much more detail.

I would like to end with this thought: Almost all cases of Spinal Degeneration have their roots in childhood – some crazy incident that you've long forgotten. I would consider it an honor to check your children to make certain they are not subluxated.

I will continue this subject in the next issue of this Newsletter. Please feel very welcome to pass it onto your friends and neighbors – I would like to help them!



Please...if you have any questions, or would like any information on any health topic, it would be my pleasure to help you! Talk with you next month.....