

By Karen Thomas

Summer's a great time to be outdoors. There is virtually no end to the activities we can enjoy with our family and friends on the ball field, in the pool and on our Rollerblades.

But, uh-oh! One morning, after riding baby on the bike or sliding into home plate, you wake up feeling like you were shot out of a cannon.

Not as young as you used to be? The beginning of the end? Probably not.

Weekend warrior or worn and weary homemaker, pain does not have to become a way of life. On the contrary, pain is a calling card that something is not quite right within the body. Even for the most stouthearted, the best thing you can do when in severe or persistent pain is to see a doctor.

To diagnose the cause of the problem, your doctor will take a comprehensive history, give you a physical examination and perhaps perform diagnostic tests such as X-rays.

One question that will be asked of you is whether there was a recent injury.

One of my first cases years ago involved a mother who wrenched her back while removing laundry from the washing machine, a task she had performed routinely for years without incident.

More recently, a police officer came into my office the day after tackling a suspect. He described his neck and

shoulder stiffness as feeling like the clothes he was wearing were still on their hangers. In these cases and countless others, there is a common cause — a condition known as a subluxation syndrome.

What is a subluxation? Why does it hurt so much? How can you make it go away?

Simply stated, a subluxation is a misalignment or loss of the normal ranges of joint motion. The subluxation becomes complicated — the "syndrome" — by the second-

dary responses of the body to protect the injured joint. Muscles that surround the affected joint contract and spasm; blood vessels constrict and swelling occurs; ligaments around the joint may be partially torn, causing joint fluid to leak into the surrounding tissue; local nerve endings become irritated from the chemical changes and fire repeatedly. Ouch!

To treat this kind of injury, some medical doctors may prescribe a combination of medications such as anti-

inflammatories, muscle relaxants and pain-killers as well as bed rest; collectively this approach can alleviate pain.

More often, if you did not seek chiropractic care initially, your medical doctor may refer you directly to a chiropractor. Chiropractic doctors will treat a subluxation syndrome with spinal manipulative therapy to restore normal biomechanics to the joints. To support the spinal adjustment, treatments may include physiotherapy, massage, vitamin supplementation, rehabilita-

tive exercise and possibly an orthopedic support such as orthotics (custom-made shoe inserts). Many patients prefer this drug-free approach and find quick, long-lasting relief from their condition.

If you experience pain, whether you can identify the cause or not, chances are very good that there is a treatment out there that will help you.

Don't ignore or endure pain. You can recover and enjoy an improved quality of life. Whether it is finishing a triathlon, jogging a loop around the park or working over-time without those killer headaches, everyone can benefit from the variety of traditional and alternative health care choices available.

Remember the words of Eubie Blake, "If I knew I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself."

So, take care and be well.

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Health Update