

MIND BODY & SPIRIT

Complete Health Includes Mind, Body and Spirit





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An eBook by the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress



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Mental health has a much greater impact on our physical health than many may think. If we're anxious, depressed or stressed, for example, we may cope by self-medicating with drugs and alcohol, which tend to make our health worse. We also may make poorer choices about our nutrition, sleep, relationships and physical activity, all of which significantly affect our health.

That is why this eBook is focused on the key elements of our lives that can enhance our health—beyond chiropractic care. As a doctor of chiropractic (DC) for nearly 25 years, I have witnessed

countless times how the care we provide improves the health of our patients' mind, body and spirit – especially for those suffering from back and neck pain and lack of mobility. However, the care we deliver is only a part of a much larger whole.

A more significant health impact is made by the daily choices we make about:

- **Nutrition**
- **Stress management**
- **Hydration**
- **Physical activity**
- **Posture**
- **Mindset**
- **Sleep**



Each chapter in this eBook contains helpful tips that can improve these important mental and physical health aspects of your life. The advice may echo some of the recommendations you have heard from your DC, who was trained to care for your physical aches and pains, but also to explore the root causes of your discomfort and understand the obstacles in the way of better health and well-being.

In other words, your doctor's care should not end when you leave their office—it should extend into your home and workplace, too. We hope the tips and insight motivate you to make the small changes in your life that, when consistently followed, can make a big impact on your mental and physical health for many years to come.

Sherry McAllister DC, M.S(Ed).

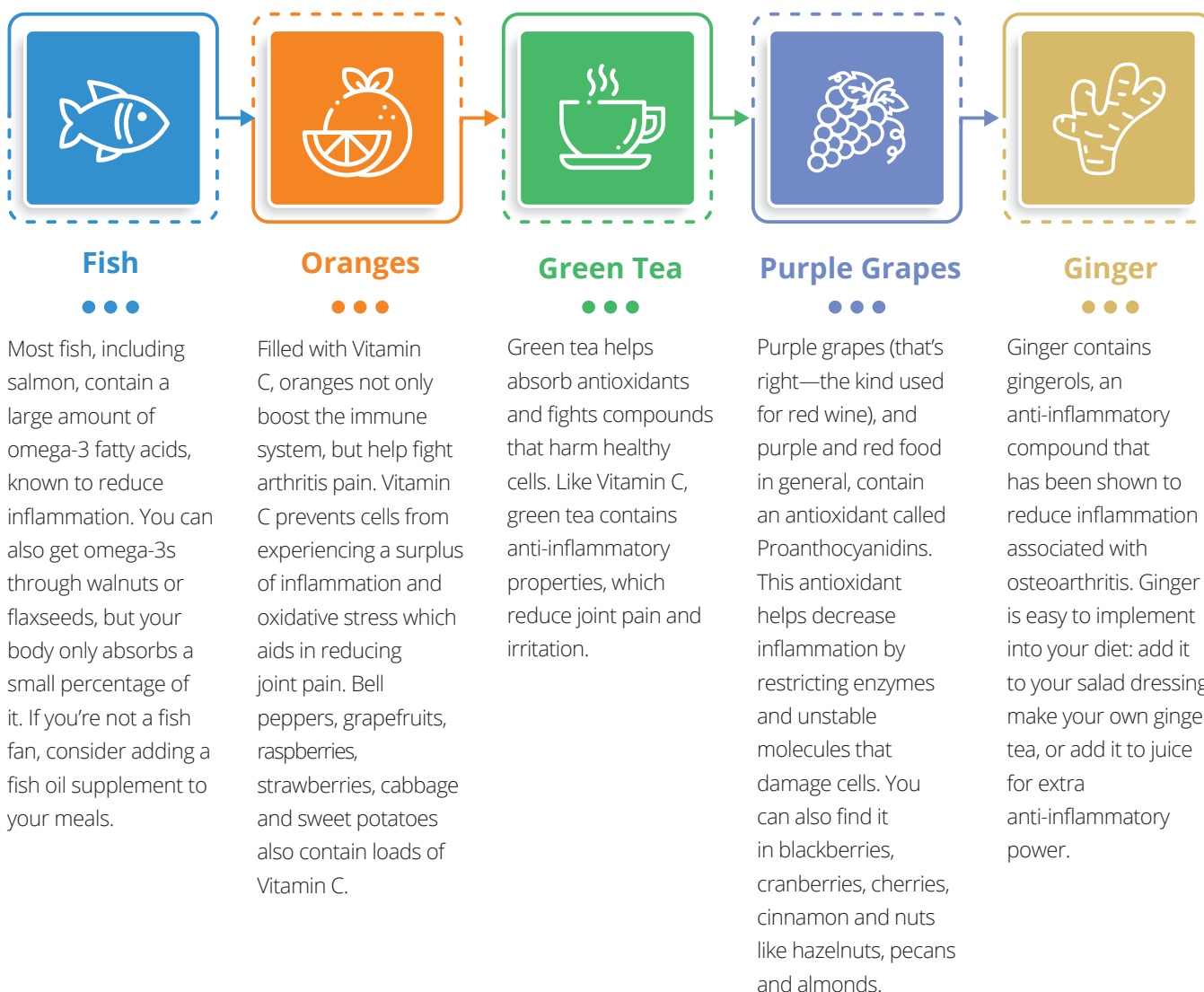
*Executive Vice President of the Foundation
for Chiropractic Progress*

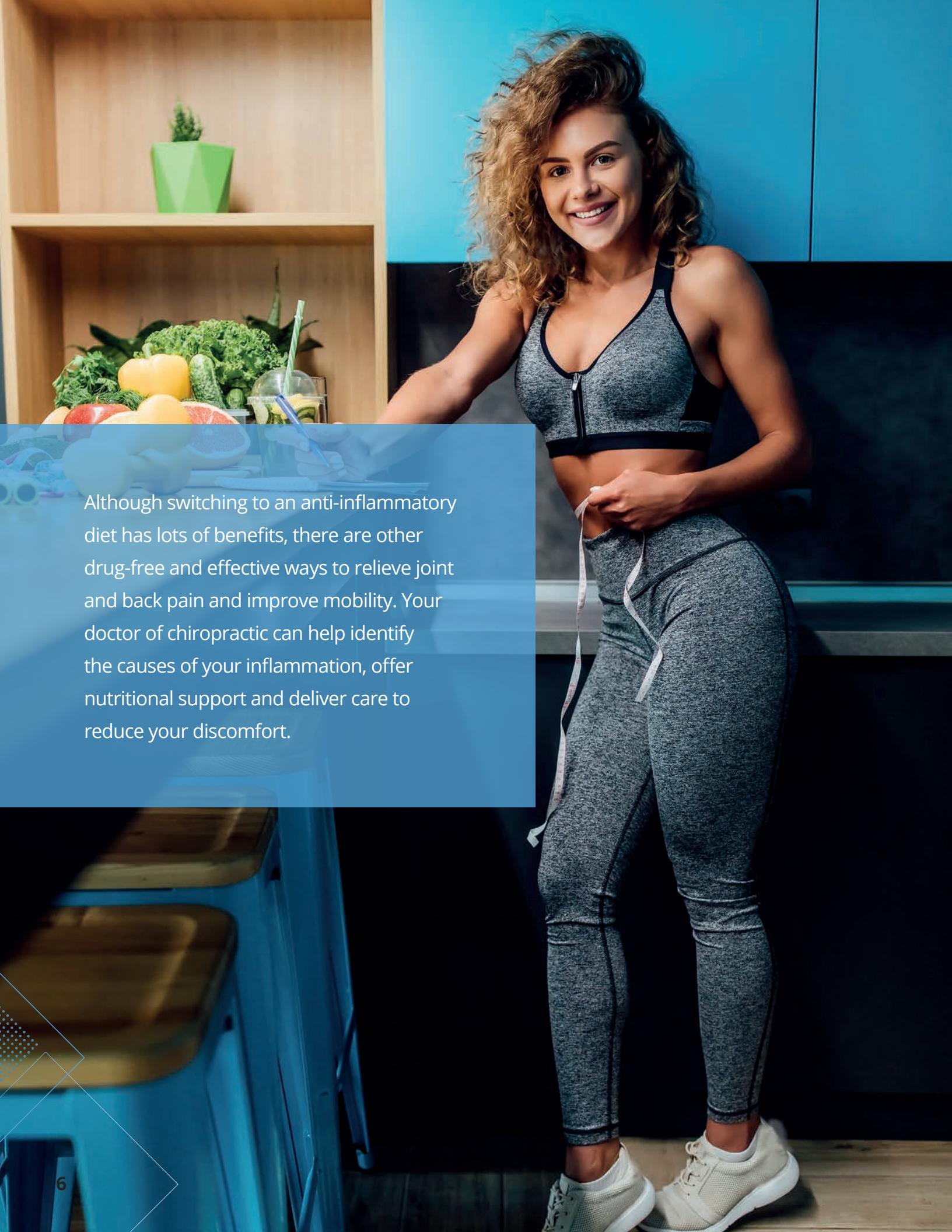
It All Starts with Nutrition

Did you know?

Poor nutrition can compromise your body's ability to fight infection and increase your risk of getting sick. However, most people do not realize that our dietary choices can also aggravate chronic pain due to inflammatory ingredients in our food such as sodium, gluten, trans-fats and added sugars. To help reduce arthritis, joint and back pain, try an anti-inflammatory diet containing whole grains, nuts, veggies, fruits, unprocessed meats and healthy fats.

The following are five foods you can add to your diet to help decrease inflammation:



A woman with curly hair, wearing a grey and black sports bra and leggings, is smiling and measuring her waist with a white tape measure. She is standing in a kitchen with blue cabinets and a wooden countertop. To her left, there is a wooden shelf with a green geometric planter and a bowl of fresh fruits and vegetables. The background is a bright blue wall.

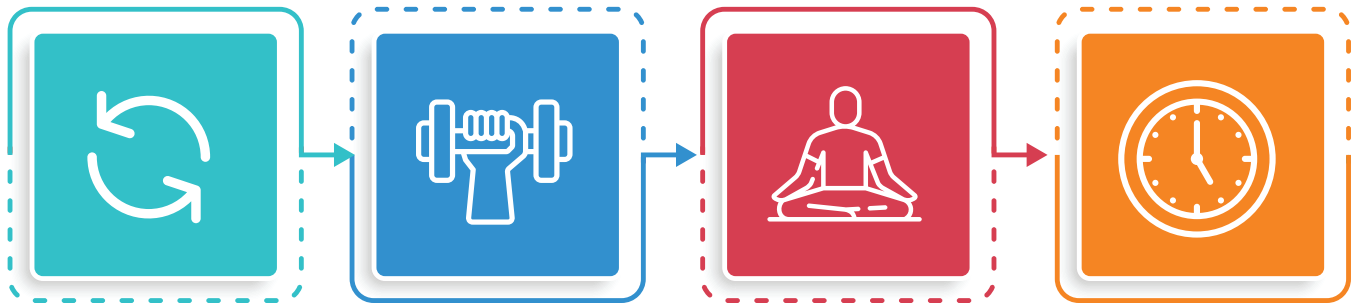
Although switching to an anti-inflammatory diet has lots of benefits, there are other drug-free and effective ways to relieve joint and back pain and improve mobility. Your doctor of chiropractic can help identify the causes of your inflammation, offer nutritional support and deliver care to reduce your discomfort.

Stress Management = Health Management

Did you know?

No one is immune to the stress of everyday life. Big or small, positive or negative, stress affects physical AND mental health.

Follow these research-backed tips to alleviate stress:



Establish a routine



Thoughtfully structure your day by making a to-do list. This will help you stick to a schedule to best manage your time and workload. Designate a space for a specific activity, such as a designated home office. This will reduce distractions and help you stay focused on the task at hand.

Exercise



Physical activity is a great way to combat stress. Exercise releases endorphins, which boost your mood and feelings of relaxation. Exercise, however, can include much more than going to the gym or for a run around your neighborhood. Approaches such as online fitness videos, walking your dog, practicing yoga and riding a bike are all great ways to release endorphins and get blood pumping through the body.

Meditate

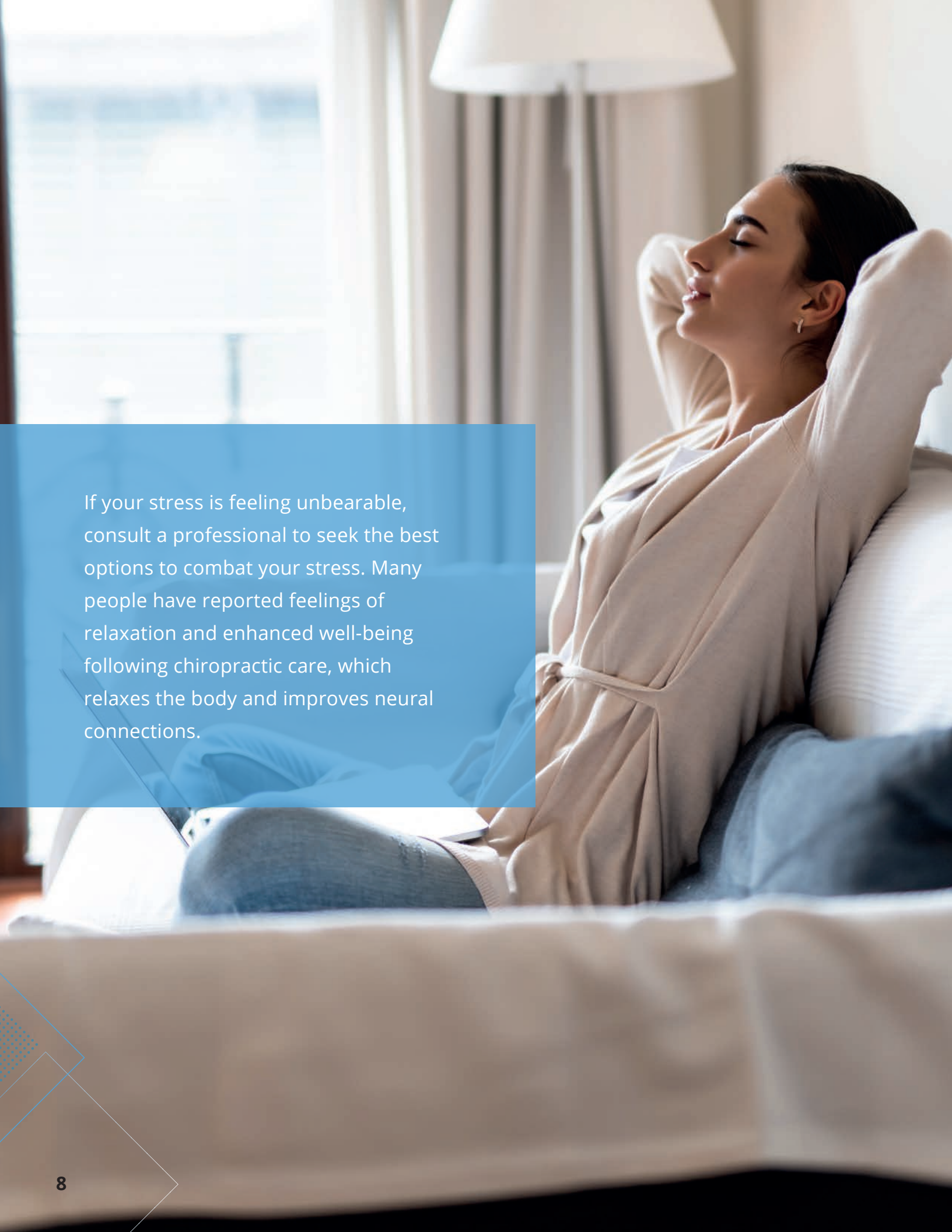


Practicing mindfulness is an effective way to release feelings of stress and anxiety. Research has shown that 20 minutes of meditation amounts to the same restoration as an hour and a half nap. Starting and ending your day with meditation is a great way to incorporate it into your daily schedule. To get started, try meditation apps, online meditation videos and deep breathing.

Spend time with family and pets



A hug from a loved one or a cuddle with your pet releases oxytocin into the body. Oxytocin is referred to as the “cuddle hormone” and has been shown to increase happiness and reduce feelings of stress.

A woman with dark hair is lying in bed, propped up on pillows, wearing a light-colored robe. She has her eyes closed and a peaceful expression, with her hands behind her head. The room is softly lit, with a window showing a view of a city and a lamp visible in the background.

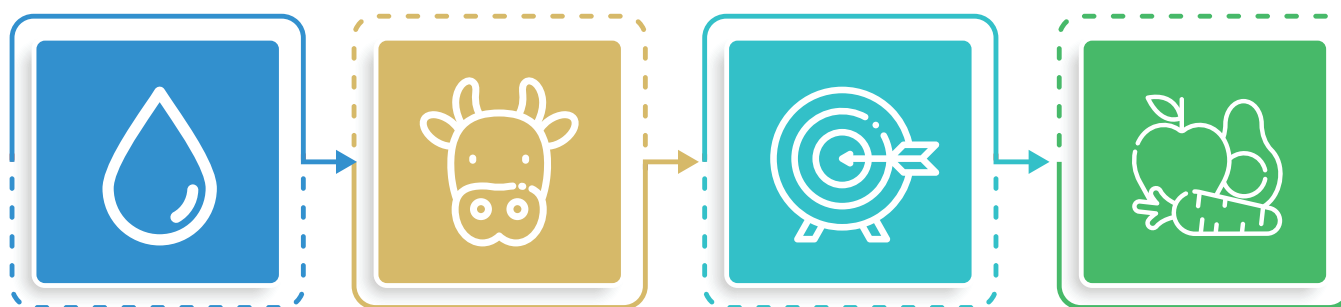
If your stress is feeling unbearable, consult a professional to seek the best options to combat your stress. Many people have reported feelings of relaxation and enhanced well-being following chiropractic care, which relaxes the body and improves neural connections.

Staying Hydrated is Key to Staying Healthy

Did you know?

Three-quarters of Americans are chronically dehydrated. Research shows that only 2% of water loss in the body causes vital functions such as memory, focus, vision and even reaction time to be compromised. Dehydration can exacerbate—or even cause—joint pain.

To stay hydrated, consider the following tips:



Flavor your water



If you struggle with the monotony of drinking plain water throughout the day, try flavoring your water with fresh fruit, or sip flavor-enhanced water. Lemon, cucumbers, strawberries, mint leaves, raspberries and limes are also great options to add a hint of flavor.

Try milk



Milk is a great way to stay hydrated. Due to its concentration of carbohydrates, calcium, protein and electrolytes, milk is more hydrating than water. Not a milk fan? Try making oatmeal with milk. The oats absorb moisture and can make a tasty breakfast or snack. Add some fruit to the top for an extra hydration boost.

Set goals for your water intake




The amount of water you should drink throughout the day varies from person to person. The standard recommendation is about a half-gallon of water per day or 8 glasses of water. Set goals to drink a specific amount of water throughout the day and make a habit to start drinking water first thing in the morning. This will kickstart your metabolism and give you the energy you need to start your day.

Eat fruits and veggies



Fruits and vegetables are great sources of water. Try adding more fruit and vegetables to your diet, you can even get creative and make a smoothie. Fruits and vegetables with high water content include cucumbers, celery, tomatoes, watermelon, strawberries, spinach, peaches, lettuce and oranges.

A man with a beard, wearing a red baseball cap and a red athletic shirt with blue and white patterns on the sleeves, is shown in profile drinking from a red water bottle. He is wearing white earbuds and a white wristband. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building.

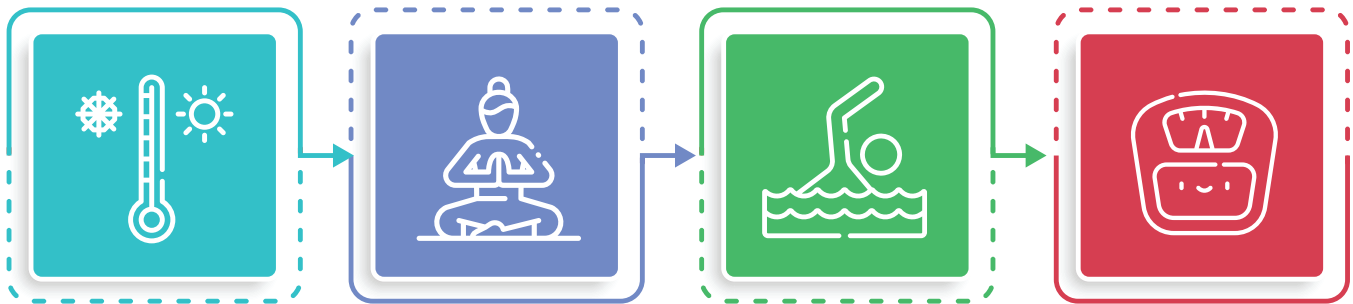
Since your joints rely heavily on having sufficient fluids to move smoothly and function properly, dehydration can cause pain. If, after following the hydration tips, you still experience joint pain or stiffness, contact your doctor of chiropractic.

Feeling Great Means Taking Control of Your Joint Pain

Did you know?

Joint inflammation and pain affect more than 50 million adults nationwide. With more than 100 different joint diseases, symptoms can vary from person to person.

The following are a few effective remedies for treating symptoms of joint overwork:



Hot and cold therapy



Heat therapy boosts circulation and can soothe stiff joints, while cold therapy restricts the blood vessels, slows circulation, reduces swelling and numbs pain. Try starting the day with a warm shower to relieve stiffness. Apply paraffin wax or place a heating pad on aching joints. For cold treatments, wrap ice in a towel and apply it to symptomatic areas, or submerge the joint in ice water or use a cold pack.

Mindfulness meditation



Meditation is a powerful tool to help us focus on our feelings, but also our body and what it is experiencing in that present moment. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) uses meditation to train the brain to confront and react to physical pain differently. By implementing these MBSR techniques, people have reduced early morning stiffness, and the number of painful joints.

Low-impact exercise

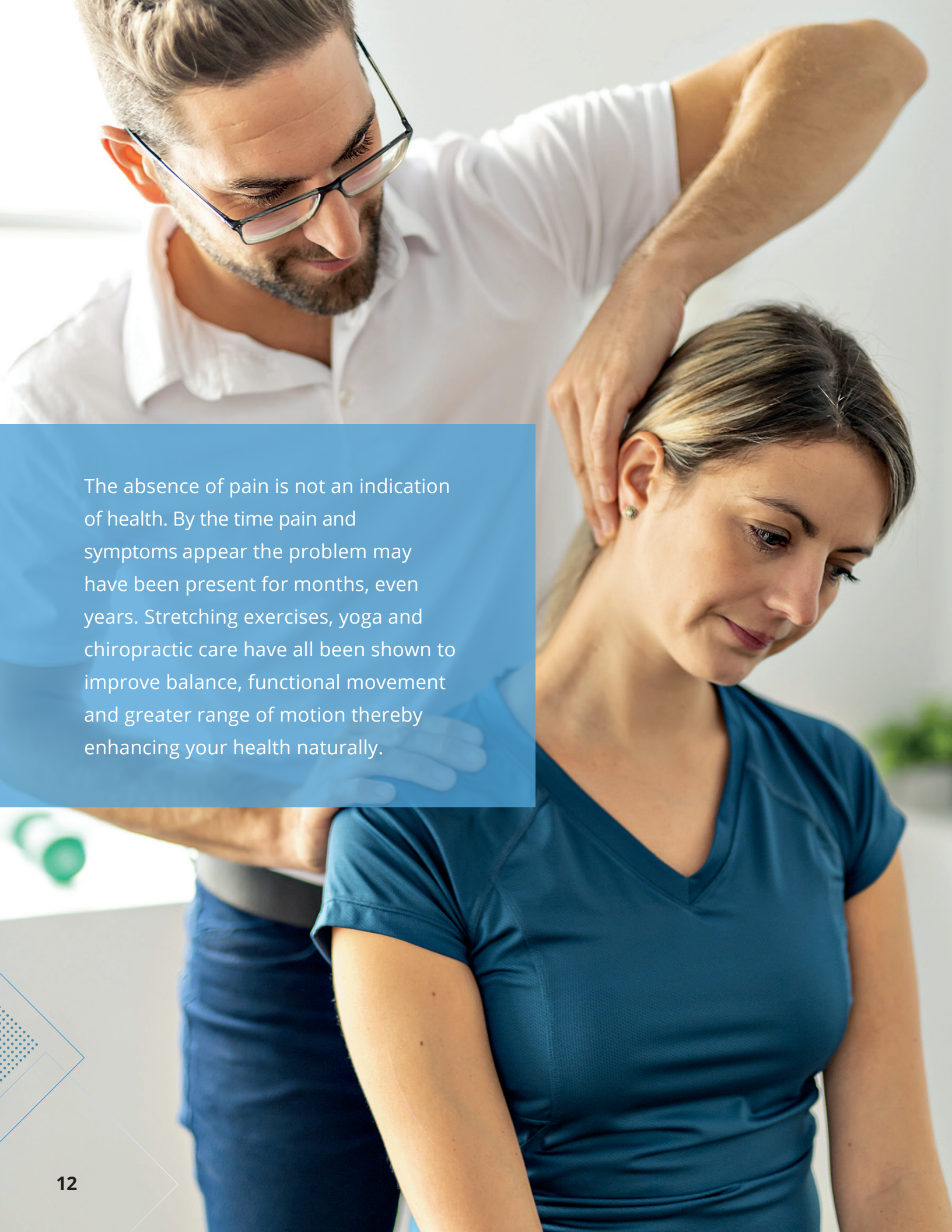


Exercises like Tai Chi, Iyengar Yoga and aquatic exercise provide great low-impact exercise to relieve joint pain. Tai Chi exercise fuses slow, gentle movements geared towards increasing flexibility, strength and balance. Iyengar Yoga focuses on correctional anatomical alignment to relieve tension and inflammation. Aquatic exercise provides resistance, and buoyancy to support the body, relieving pressure on the joints.

Weight management



Excess weight can burden our joints, particularly our lower back, hips and knees. Fortunately, even losing a small amount of weight – as little as 10 pounds depending on the person -- can relieve joint pain and make it easier for us to exercise and perform other physical activities that can help us lose additional pounds.



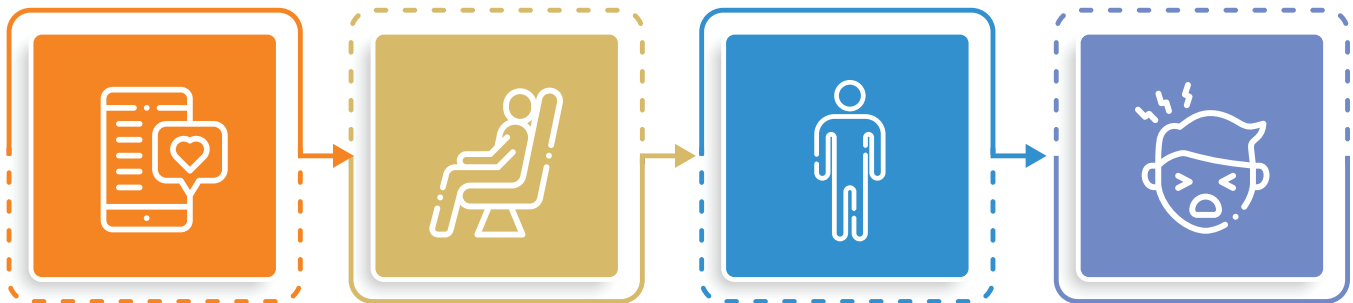
The absence of pain is not an indication of health. By the time pain and symptoms appear the problem may have been present for months, even years. Stretching exercises, yoga and chiropractic care have all been shown to improve balance, functional movement and greater range of motion thereby enhancing your health naturally.

Straighten Out Your Health with Proper Posture

Did you know?

Poor posture has surprising consequences that affect our health and quality of life. Over time, bad posture can cause serious injury to your spine and lead to chronic pain. Good posture, on the other hand, can change your mood immediately, relieve back pain and may even help you live a longer, healthier life.

Consider the following posture tips:



"In, Up, Back, Down"



When we are using our cellphones we need to remember:

- 1. In:** Bring your elbows into your side, not out far and wide. This will stop you from dropping your shoulders too much.
- 2. Up:** Lift your chin. Notice how your arms also start to go up.
- 3. Back & Down:** Now pull your shoulders back and down a bit.

Transition Frequently from Sitting to Standing



Sitting too long can create fatigued muscles and poor posture as you tire. Standing too long can add extra stress to joints of the knee and feet. Ideally it is best to find a transition from sitting to standing regularly that will help take stress off certain joints and muscle groups.

Distribute your weight evenly




When on our feet, we tend to favor one hip. Slouching while standing can also create tension in your lower back and weaken your abdominal muscles. Make a conscious effort to alternate and distribute weight evenly between your feet to ensure you are maintaining proper spine alignment.

Check in with your body regularly



Take a few minutes every day to check for tightness, soreness, and aching anywhere on your body. Perform some exercises or use some drug-free home remedies, such as heat, ice or meditation, which may help alleviate pain.

A person is performing a handstand in a park. They are wearing a purple long-sleeved top and black leggings. Their legs are extended straight up into the air, and their arms are supporting their weight on the ground. The background is a blurred forest with trees that have some autumn-colored leaves. The ground is covered with fallen brown leaves. A semi-transparent blue box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

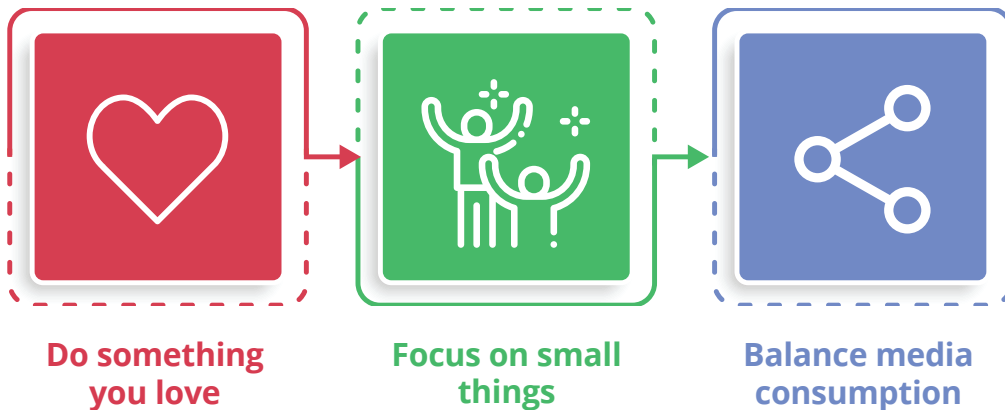
If you are wondering about your posture, take photos of your normal stance while standing up straight. Take your photos to your next appointment with your doctor of chiropractic to get help with assessing your posture including alignment, balance and gait.

Develop a Positive Mindset

Did you know?

A big chunk of how you feel is under your control. Our living environment, the choices we make about the way we spend our discretionary time and the thoughts we allow to linger can heavily impact not only our mood, but also our health. Taking action to surround yourself with things that bring you happiness will positively affect your mind-body connection and reduce feelings of anxiety.


The following are some small behavior changes that can improve the way you feel:



... Studies show that people who stick to a hobby have better moods, feel more interested, have less stress and lower heart rates. Many Americans have an “illusion of busy-ness.” By giving up that mindset and embracing a hobby, you can sharpen your ability to solve problems in other areas of life—like work and family.

... By focusing on small things that bring you joy each day you can improve your mood and health in the long-term. Write these positive observations in a journal. When on paper (digital or otherwise), it reminds you of moments that have brought you joy and provides you with an archive of happiness you can use later for reflection and mood-lifting.

... While we use news media to stay informed and social media to stay connected with others, feelings of negativity can follow. Try limiting the time spent reading the news or on social media to balance the negativity with the benefits. Leave your phone out of the bedroom or set a timer on your phone for your social media apps.

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light gray t-shirt, lying on a table. A person in a white shirt is performing a chiropractic adjustment on his neck and shoulder. The man's head is tilted back, and his eyes are closed. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

When suffering from feelings of anxiety, many Americans turn to medical doctors who prescribe benzodiazepines (anti-anxiety medication that includes the brand name drugs Valium and Xanax). When used daily and for extended periods, however, the benefits of benzodiazepines diminish and the risks associated with their use increase.

Non-pharmacological options are available and can set you on a path to improve many elements that need to be addressed to relieve anxiety. Speak to your doctor of chiropractic to learn more about what options may be right for you.

Sleep Well to Feel Well All Year

Did you know?

Good sleep habits help you maintain good health and recover faster when you are sick. Meanwhile, significant evidence shows that insufficient sleep has mental and physical health consequences, including weakening your immune system.

To protect your health and improve your mood, follow these sleep tips:



Consider a weighted blanket



Weighted blankets were originally used to help some people feel calmer and more comfortable. Occupational therapists have utilized weighted blankets for years for grounding patients, helping them relax and self-soothe. These blankets provide tactile sensations including warmth, pressure, and a feeling of being held. Studies have shown weighted blankets are an effective, complementary, drug-free intervention for people with chronic insomnia.



Put your phone on do not disturb while you sleep



Boundaries can help you in all areas of your life, but in the wake of a stressful week, they're especially helpful in quelling anxiety and enabling a good night's sleep. If you're feeling overwhelmed by constant push notifications from a news app, text messages, email or social media, disable the alerts at night.



Choose the proper sleep position



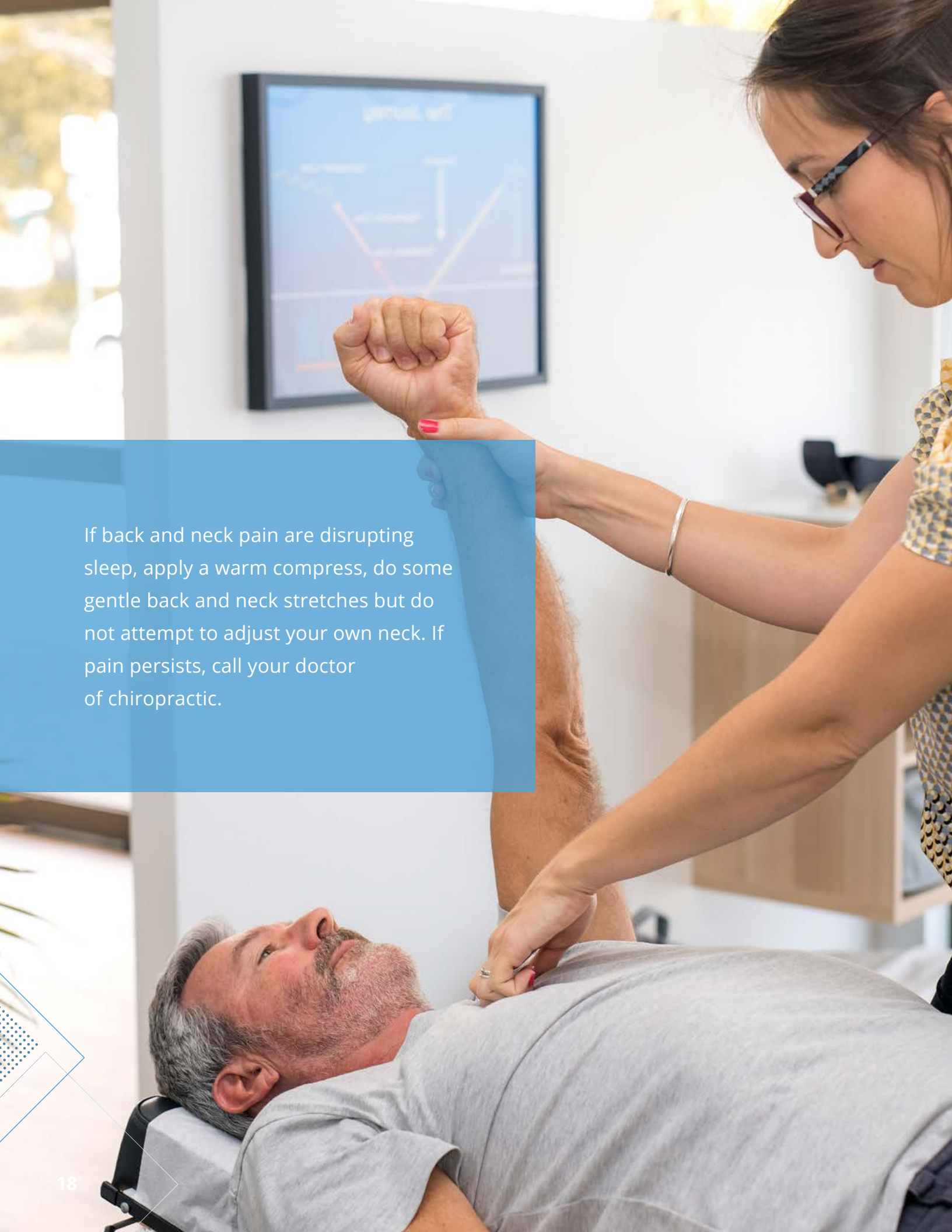
Harmful positions create pressure on your neck and back, causing pain and an unhealthy spinal alignment. Sleeping on your back or side are best to support a healthy posture while sleeping on your stomach can contribute to poor posture and back pain.



Pick the right pillow



Sleep with your neck in a neutral position supported by a pillow that fills the space between your neck and the mattress, but the pillow should not go as far as supporting your shoulders. Although you should keep your head supported, avoid propping it up too much. Place another pillow under your knees (if you sleep on your back) or between your knees (if on your side) to maintain the normal curve of your back.

A woman with glasses and a patterned top is performing a physical therapy exercise on a man lying on a table. She is holding his right arm and hand, which is clenched into a fist. The man is looking up at her. In the background, there is a framed diagram on the wall. A blue text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

If back and neck pain are disrupting sleep, apply a warm compress, do some gentle back and neck stretches but do not attempt to adjust your own neck. If pain persists, call your doctor of chiropractic.



Doctors of chiropractic focus on patients' overall health; they want to help the body heal itself and avoid pharmaceutical interventions. In addition to operating a general chiropractic practice, some doctors of chiropractic specialize in areas such as sports, neurology, orthopedics, pediatrics or nutrition, among others. Speak to your doctor of chiropractic about what s/he specializes in. You might be pleasantly surprised.



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