

Oh, My Aching Back!

Q. What is your opinion of chiropractic therapy as a way to treat lower-back pain?

—E.H., San Antonio, Texas

A. I believe visiting both a medical doctor and a chiropractor is an excellent way to treat back pain.

A physician usually first examines a patient with lower-back pain for muscle spasm and then performs a brief neurological exam and possibly an “LS-spine” X-ray of the back. The patient then may be prescribed anti-inflammatory medication, muscle relaxants and a pain medication and is instructed to return in one to two weeks if the pain hasn’t improved.

If the pain doesn’t improve, chiropractic therapy may then be very beneficial for the patient. An adjustment can relieve pain and promote the production of endorphins, which are natural painkillers.

Most chiropractors believe the spine is the most important support structure in the body, since it protects the spinal cord. Spinal misalignments, called “subluxations,” may cause back pain or can interfere with the nerves and keep internal organs from working at peak efficiency. Depending on where it occurs on the spine, a subluxation may affect the heart, lungs, gallbladder, stomach, pancreas, spleen, liver or other organs.

A chiropractic adjustment will many times balance both the

parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems. These are parts of the autonomic nervous system, which regulates the automatic internal body functions such as heart rate, respiratory rate, digestion and so on.

Many chiropractors are excellent nutritionists and usually are knowledgeable about diet, nutritional supplements and exercise. Also, many chiropractors use forms of physical therapy such as ultrasound, electrical stimulation, diathermy and hydrotherapy, and these can be used to enhance a patient's recovery.

I commonly refer my patients to chiropractic physicians who are both well-trained and able to spend adequate time with their patients—not ones who see 75 to 100 patients a day. You want one who will offer you a comprehensive program that includes a physical exam, adjustment, physical therapy, a rehab program, a healthful diet, nutritional supplementation and exercise.

The best way, I believe, to find a good chiropractor is by word of mouth, by consulting someone knowledgeable at your local health-food store or by asking your physician. Your state health department can give you information about a chiropractor's education, specialized training and adjustment techniques, or can inform you if there is or has been any legal action against a particular chiropractor.

Q. I am 30 years old and have a fever blister that reoccurs every month, in spite of medications I take. Is there another way to treat this?

—V.B., Columbus, Ohio

A. Fever blisters, or “cold sores,” are caused by the herpes simplex I virus and are extremely common in the United States. This virus is different from herpes simplex II, which is sexually transmitted. Cold sores are triggered by a fever, exposure to the sun, menstruation, stress, food allergies or a depressed immune system.

The first thing you should do is try to identify which of these factors is causing the repeated outbreak. Then I recommend that you follow a diet according to your blood type and identify and eliminate any foods you are allergic to. You should take a buffered vitamin C in a dosage of 1,000 mg (milligrams) three times a day, and once a day you should take a comprehensive multivitamin that contains at least 30 mg of zinc.

The next step, for my patients, is to take 1,000 mg of Lysine three times a day and 500 mg of olive-leaf extract three times a day. Lysine, an amino acid, and olive leaf, an herb, have antiviral activity.

In addition, I suggest you use a topical cream called lemon balm, which also may be called Melissa cream. Apply this two to four times a day.

If, after doing these things, you continue to have reoccurring cold sores, then I recommend you take a bovine thymus extract such as Cytozyme-Thy to support your immune system. Take one to two tabs three times a day. This can be obtained from Biotics Research, (800) 874-7318.