

Never-Ending Surprises

from Our Amazing Bodies



Dr. Todd Staker, foreground, and Dr. Ben Schemmel often use this large graphic illustration to explain the relationship between the spine, nerves, and muscles to their patients.

The human body has great capacity both to heal and surprise, notes Dr. Todd Staker and his colleague, Dr. Ben Schemmel of Staker Chiropractic Center in Cary.

“Recently,” Dr. Schemmel recalls, “I worked with a woman in her mid-forties to relieve persistent low-back pain, using both standard chiropractic adjustments and Active Release (ART) on her back and neck to break down adhesions that form in soft tissues such as muscles and tendons.

“She made excellent progress, and was soon virtually free of pain. And then came the surprise. She had not told me she was also dealing with a significant level of incontinence, but several weeks into our treatment, she reported—with obvious pleasure—that she had become virtually completely relieved of this nagging problem, even as her back pain resolved, as well.”

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Dr. Staker joins the conversation with a recollection that dates back many years.

“When he slid into second base in the midst of a hard-fought Little League baseball game more than 20 years ago, as he recalled to me, John never imagined that he had set in motion an injury that might plague him for the rest of his life.

“This was in fact a challenging case,” recalls Dr. Staker. “When John was a kid, Little League bases were fixed, they had no give in them. At the time, the injury from John’s aggressive slide sidelined him for a couple of weeks, and then he resumed his usual boyhood activities.

“When he came to see me a few months ago, now 33 years old, he was again suffering from an athletic injury, this one incurred in basketball. He came down with a rebound in an awkward position, and thought he had simply pulled a muscle or twisted his back. He came in here with severe spasms in his low back, in his hip area, and down into his calf. One foot was feeling numb and tingling.

“I took a close look at his lower back, and what I found was of more than a little concern. The low back presented with a dimpling effect. The L5 bone that sits right on top of the sacrum felt to me as if it had slid forward just a bit. When that happens, it’s a condition called spondylolytic spondylolisthesis, which occurs either from trauma, or you’re born with it, or because of a degenerative process.

“John is not old enough to have a degenerative spondylo, so clearly we were dealing with trauma. X-rays revealed a 30 percent anterior displacement of the L5 vertebrae. One side of the area was very unstable, the other side quite stable. Additional, special X-rays were needed to determine that John was a candidate for chiropractic adjustment—and we concluded that he was.

“This was a particularly challenging case because, in some situations where you have a spondylolisthesis such as this, with an anterior displacement, surgery might be advised. It can be a very unstable condition. But this patient was at a point where I felt that clinically we could treat him.

“As I did the adjustment work, I came in very lightly and very gently underneath his L5 and went right down to the sacrum and sacroiliac joint and slowly, lightly manipulated his spine and his pelvis to take just enough pressure off the nerve to make it feel better.

“He was free of pain in about two weeks. After more discussion with John, it seemed clear that the serious injury to his back was an aftermath of his Little League baseball injury. The basketball injury simply aggravated a condition that on its own was degenerating over time.”

If he wants to avoid surgery, John will need to change many habits. “He’s likely to see some continuing spinal degeneration, and probably some degenerative disc disease,” Dr. Staker believes. “He’s on a strict plan to avoid all compressive maneuvers to his lower back, even a jump, for example, off a foot-high ledge and landing on his feet. No weight lifting, no basketball. He is at a crossroads: if he resumes his active lifestyle, he faces the prospect of a significant injury and the likelihood of surgery. If he takes it easy, allows the condition to stabilize, and allows us to manage the problem, he may do well. It’s not fixable. It’s not curable. But it is manageable.”

PATIENT IS TALLER

While Dr. Staker used standard chiropractic adjustments with John, he still frequently combines this work with the Active Release Technique™ (ART), which, he says, “has taken our ability to help our patients to another level.”

A recent 34-year-old patient proved to be an excellent candidate for the combination of traditional chiropractic adjustments and ART, Dr. Staker notes. “This woman was referred by a massage therapist. She was in a nasty car accident in 1979, followed by a severe work injury in 1988. For all of those years, she had been seeking and getting treatment for pain, but the pain itself was never resolved, only sometimes relieved.

“When she came to us, she was having severe shoulder pain, back pain, and pain that radiated all the way down to her hand. It seemed to me we were dealing with a pinched nerve or brachial plexus problem. The brachial plexus is located in the neck and distributes nerves throughout the arms—much like an electric junction box distributes wires to different parts of a house.”

The patient was stunned and the doctor delighted when this young woman was completely pain-free within 11 days of her first treatment.

“All I did that was different from her many other treatments was Active Release. I adjusted her spine where she had a few problems, and did Active Release on several muscles within her back and her neck.

“In the process, we found she had a small curve in her back, a slight scoliosis. When she went to her medical doctor later, the nurse measured her height three times, and then finally said with surprise, ‘You’ve grown an inch!’ She called to tell us she was feeling both wonderful and taller.” **h&h**

“The nurse measured her height three times, and then finally said with surprise, ‘you’ve grown an inch!’”

For more information about chiropractic treatment, contact:
M. Todd Staker, DC
Ben Schemmel, DC
STAKER CHIROPRACTIC CENTER
3550 NW Cary Parkway, Suite 104
Cary, NC 27513
Telephone: (919) 460-1515
www.stakerchiropractic.com