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From the archives, Dr. Staker, in the year 2000, helps his daughter, Mary Elizabeth, adjust a special book-bag designed to be kind to her back. Mary Elizabeth now dances professionally for the New York City Ballet.

In this family-orientated chiropractic practice, with a special interest in caring for athletes (*see box below*), Drs. Todd Staker and Ben Schemmel have served patients as young as two days old and as old as 94.

“And it’s true that I often consider those early-in-life spinal checkups to be among the most important of all,” says Dr. Staker.

“I’ve never met a parent who didn’t appreciate the importance of regular checkups for their child’s teeth, hearing, eyes, and ears. We chiropractors need to do a better job of educating parents, because in truth an early-in-life spinal checkup can have a dramatic impact on a child’s entire life. A child’s spine is a lifeline, because running through it is the spinal cord containing billions of nerve fibers that send messages and energy from the brain to every part of the body.

“If there is blockage of any of the nerves along the spinal cord, any nerve damage at all, then we are confronting a state of dis-ease that can and often does result in a weakening of a child’s resistance to illness. Yes, there can be and there often is a relationship between a child’s spinal misalignment and ear infections or frequent colds or bed-wetting or vision problems, and much more.

“Ideally,” Dr. Staker explains, “a child’s spine will be examined by a chiropractor at least three times and as many as six times in the first year of life.

“A first exam is a good idea right after the birth process. Injuries to the spine can be caused by a difficult delivery, a breech presentation, or simply too much stress on the child’s body. For example, a two-day-old child came to me with his head cocked to one side as the result of a difficult delivery. With a very gentle adjustment, we cleared the condition up very quickly.

“A second spinal check is advised when a baby starts to hold his or her head up.



Adjustments are a familiar part of life for Dr. Schemmel’s son, Lukas.

Babies are very top heavy, which in itself can lead to spinal problems.”

Additional markers where spinal checkups are recommended, says Dr. Staker, “are when the baby first sits up, when the baby starts to crawl, when the baby starts to stand, and finally, when the baby starts to walk.”

COMBINING TECHNIQUES

Dr. Staker and Dr. Schemmel thoroughly enjoy the diversity of this family-oriented practice, welcoming kids and professional athletes, “weekend warriors”

Spinal Adjustments for Infants

and tri-athletes, office workers with carpal tunnel syndrome, and the ever-present low-back pain patient.

“I find more similarities in all of these patients than I do differences,” Dr.

Staker says, “and what we find works especially well for a professional hockey player may be equally effective for a 50-year-old truck driver or a housewife.”

Often, the doctors employ the Active Release Technique (ART) as an adjunct to chiropractic adjustments. “At Palmer Chiropractic College, I learned the invaluable skills of chiropractors in treating joint, bone, nerve, and spinal disk problems,” says Dr. Staker. “ART adds to these therapeutic skills in an extremely useful way by allowing us to treat the muscle and tendon along with our traditional treatment of the musculoskeletal system.

It’s a breakthrough therapy that is being used by health care professionals in many disciplines.”

The combination of soft-tissue trauma and spinal misalignment is found in a great array of health complaints, notes Dr. Schemmel. “Headaches provide a classic example of how intense stress, muscular tension, and spinal misalignments often combine to create a difficult health problem. What we see repeatedly is that when we remove the stress on the spine, by chiropractic adjustments, and the stress from the muscles, using Active Release, there is most often a tremendous improvement in the patient’s headaches, and a wonderful relief from the pain of muscles that are drawn much too tight.

“In all of these cases, stress is not the cause of the problem, but is often a contributing factor. Stress significantly alters our chemistry: it increases the flow of stress hormones and the chemicals that cause muscles to tighten up. It’s our job to try to modify stress with the techniques and tools we have available to us.”

FOR THE LOVE OF SPORTS

As youngsters and throughout their college years, both doctors were themselves active in a variety of sports, and remain so today as participants, observers, and care-givers. They mostly function as healers of a great variety of aches and pains. For example, for virtually the club’s entire existence in North Carolina, Dr. Staker has rendered care to players of the Carolina Hurricanes NHL hockey team, including throughout their dizzying run to the Stanley Cup championship in 2006. Dr. Schemmel has long offered the same level of ongoing support to the Carolina Railhawks soccer professionals.

“Treating athletes on every grade level, through the college years, as well as an array of weekend warriors, is an important part of this practice,” notes Dr. Staker. “We are actively and regularly engaged to provide preventive care and maintenance care to enhance performance. Frankly, we’re pretty powerful and effective in treating acute injuries, and helping individuals to function better, at a higher level of performance. It is really the key contribution we offer to these talented, active boys and girls and men and women.”

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