



# Halifax Chiropractic Clinic

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## PAIN DOESN'T TAKE A VACATION by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

*'Have you been doing your exercises?'*

Every day health care professionals, such as myself, ask this question and hear the same excuses time and time again –

*'I was on vacation'*

or

*'The inlaws were visiting'*

Or

*'It has been so busy at the office!'*

or

*'I didn't have time while I was away'*

or

*'I was tied up with the kids (or grandchildren)'*

In the vast majority of cases, part of your treatment will include some type of exercise or fitness activity which is specifically selected or recommended for your situation. The type of exercises will vary depending upon the injury or condition you have:

- Weight-bearing exercises – if you have osteopenia or osteoporosis (for your interest check out the articles on osteoporosis on the clinic website [www.halifaxchiropractic.ca](http://www.halifaxchiropractic.ca); click on Articles).
- Tubing exercises – for peripheral joint injuries like rotator cuff strain/tendonosis (for the trivia buffs, the rotator cuff is made up of four muscles).
- Floor exercises – these encompass a lot of different exercises which can combine strength and flexibility.
- Ball exercises – These are those large balls that you can do various exercises on, especially to strengthen the abdominals and lower back area (core muscle strengthening). Be careful when using these. Make sure that the ball is the proper size for your height and that it is an 'ANTI-BURST' design – otherwise if it bursts when you are sitting on it, you could injure yourself. An anti-burst variety will deflate slowly.
- Swimming – easy on the hip, knee and foot/ankle joints but also good for your heart and lungs. If you have any shoulder problems, your health care professional may suggest other alternatives like pool exercises.
- Pool exercises – these can be done in a shallow heated pool or in a deep pool (wearing a water belt so there is no impact on your hip or leg joint). With some pool exercise programs, there is a significant amount of arm movement so if you do have a shoulder problem, keep this in mind (perhaps the instructor can provide alternative movements).

Last but not least...

- Walking – the good ol' stand by is excellent for toning the hip and leg muscles, improving your cardiovascular fitness and is often used in cases of chronic back pain. Getting your heart rate up also causes the body to produce endorphins. These are your 'natural pain killers' and what make you feel so good after exercising.

### **Exercise is Important**

As you can see, there are many ways to rehabilitate an injury to your joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons. But you have to be consistent with your exercises. Remember – **pain does not take a vacation!** Exercises are prescribed by your chiropractor or health care professional with specific goals in mind. Correcting muscle imbalances is one of them.

Correcting muscle imbalances, may include increasing the flexibility and strength of opposing muscle groups. For instance, If your hip flexors (ie. psoas; helps to bring your knee up towards your chest) is too tight and dominant, along with your abdominals (your tummy muscles) being too weak, then this can contribute to an increased lumbar lordosis (sway-back) . This puts more pressure on the joints (facets) in your lower back (lumbar spine) and pelvis (sacro-iliac joints). This can create what is referred to as mechanical lower back pain. Mechanical lower back pain accounts for approximately 90-95% of back pain cases. In other words, there are things you can do about it.

### **What To Do**

There are a variety of treatment approaches for mechanical type back pain including specific adjustment techniques which is a type of manipulation which chiropractors use to correct or improve the mobility of joints in the spine or peripheral joints (like your shoulders, hips or knees).

There are also **sport chiropractors** who have attained their Fellowship and have considerable experience/expertise in treating peripheral joint injuries. These chiropractors are part of the network of health care professionals who provide treatment for the national team and Olympic level athletes through the Canadian Sports Centres.

### **Preventing Back Pain – The Chiropractic and Dentistry Analogy**

You are probably wondering how chiropractic and dentistry are related – there is actually a very interesting correlation between the health of your back and the health of your teeth.

With your back, exercise is a big factor – and very important. If you are prescribed exercises to do on a daily basis, then **PLEASE DO THEM!**

Re-educating your muscles is very important. By doing this, you reduce the possibility of the pain returning.

Exercises are to your back like brushing, flossing and rinsing are to your teeth (between your dental check-ups). Brushing, flossing and rinsing may not eliminate cavities or gum disease, but as your dentist tells you, these will help to significantly reduce the possibility of such problems developing in the future and improve your overall dental health.

Doing your exercises, even when you are on vacation, is important to maximizing your level of recovery – and maintaining it. Remember that 'back pain does not take a vacation'! Your back does not know about Summer vacations, March Break or the Christmas holidays.

Most basic exercise programs do not require much, if any equipment. If yours does, check with your chiropractor or health care professional about a 'holiday program' – in other words, a modified version you can do while you are away. That way you will not have any excuses.

**Did you know that?**

About 80% of patients will not continue with their exercises beyond six months! It is human nature that as the level of pain decreases, so does your level of commitment to the exercises. In other words, if the pain is not there to remind you, sometimes the thought of exercises 'slips your mind'.

Join the minority – exercise! Keep your back healthy, even when you are on vacation. That way you can hike, swim, run and play with the kids and enjoy life without behind held 'back' (pardon the pun) by back pain.

**If you have back pain...**

Call your chiropractor or health care professional and schedule an appointment to have an examination to determine what the problem is, and what you can do about it. If you have had back pain for a while, it does not just go away on its own. As health care professionals, we often hear patients say "I thought it would go away".

Back pain often needs some help. Appropriate treatment, and exercises, will help as will learning about your back and how to reduce the possibility of back or neck pain in the future.

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