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Spinal Integrity is Key to Health **By: Dr. Stephen O'Neil**

How do you know when you are hungry, cold, angry, sad, in pain or tired? The answer is the same for all, it's the Nervous System. The brain is continually sending and receiving messages to and from the environment to maintain proper balance throughout the body. Without this communication, we could not function as we do and our bodies could not self regulate and adapt to the ever changing environment we live in.

The main control center of the body is the brain. This is where all messages from the environment are received and interpreted. It is also here that appropriate responses to these messages are generated and sent back to the rest of the body or environment. These messages travel to and from the brain on a super highway known as the spinal cord. The spinal cord is a large bundle of nerves from the brain, which travel down the spine. Spinal nerves emerge from the spinal cord at different levels to supply the organs, muscles, glands and other tissues in the rest of the body.

The spinal cord can be likened to a garden hose, where the water inside represent the billions of nerve impulses flowing to and from the brain. What happens when the spinal cord is cut? It's a lot like cutting the hose. Water can no longer reach the end of the hose; it just spills out wherever it was cut. No life could flow beyond this cut in the spinal cord (hose) and either death or paralysis would result. However, what if the hose was just nicked or partially sliced. Only some of the water would make it to the end of the hose. Some of the information (water) would spill out at the area of damage. This is much like a partially damaged cord or nerve where not all the information is being received. The result can be disease or any number of disorders due to miscommunication between the brain and body. Now, what happens when someone puts a kink in the hose? This can be likened to Subluxation. A subluxation is a misalignment or restriction in the spine. These misalignments and restrictions cause inflammation to build up around the joint in the spine. Because these joints house spinal nerves, these nerves also become inflamed at which point the messages no longer flow as efficiently and like the water, they spray out the end of the nerves. When nerves are irritated and sending poor signals to and from the brain, many conditions and symptoms can arise. If poor signals are being sent to the low back muscles, they may tighten and cause low back pain and eventually result in degenerative joint disease and osteoarthritis. What if it is nerves that flow to control the immune system? Obviously the immune system will not be functioning as well and illness will result. What if the nerves affected go to control the lungs and respiratory tract? Is it then possible that certain lung conditions could be the result? What if the nerves irritated by subluxation make up the sciatic nerve? It would stand to reason then that the individual would suffer from sciatica and various symptoms down the legs.

This whole concept may seem pretty simple. That is because it is very simple. If proper communication between the brain, spinal cord and the rest of the body is not maintained, the result is disease, dysfunction and eventually death. It would then make sense to maintain this proper communication by minimizing subluxations in the spine. This, in a nutshell is what Chiropractors do. Chiropractors are trained to find, evaluate and eliminate subluxations. This allows for proper communication to be restored between the brain and muscles, organs and tissues. In turn, this promotes the free expression of nervous energy resulting in better overall function and health.

The sooner subluxation is corrected and controlled, the less permanent damage will result and the body will be better able to deal with the stressors in our busy lives. Remove the kinks in the hose to restore optimal health.