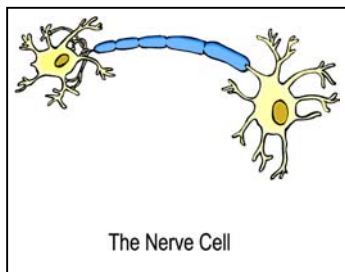


Presented by Dr. Annie Guillet, DC

Chiropractic May Help Prevent Multiple Sclerosis

According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, multiple sclerosis (MS) affects 2.5 million people worldwide.

Fortunately, research reveals that chiropractic may offer MS sufferers relief from symptoms, and it may even help prevent the disease.



An insulating substance known as myelin protects nerve fibers in the brain and spine. Multiple sclerosis (MS) — a progressive disease of the central nervous system — occurs when the myelin develops “holes,” leaving nerves exposed.

Without myelin, nerve impulses are short-circuited, resulting in lost movement and sensation. MS often affects nerve fibers in the spinal cord, consequently blocking impulses to and from the brain.

What causes the myelin to degenerate? According to Dr. Guillet, it is widely believed that MS is an autoimmune disease. Simply put, the body’s defense system fails to recognize myelin as one of the “good guys” and launches an all-out attack. It is possible for this scenario to be prevented, however, even in people with a genetic predisposition for the development of MS.

Severity and Symptoms

MS typically develops in adults between the ages of 20 and 50 (*Today’s*

Chiropractic 2000;29). Depending on how much myelin is compromised, symptoms may range from numbness and tingling of the extremities to coordination problems, slurred speech, fatigue, facial weakness, paralysis, impaired vision, bladder control problems and pain.

Luckily, there are effective options for managing MS symptoms. In one recent study conducted at a long-term care facility, chiropractic proved successful at managing chronic pain in MS sufferers (*Clinical Chiropractic* 2005;8:57-65).

Amazing? Not to doctors of chiropractic like Dr. Guillet. That’s because chiropractors have reported successful management of MS patients as early as 1934 (*Today’s Chiropractic* 2000;29).

Remission of Symptoms

Another confounding aspect of this mysterious disease is that MS symptoms frequently ebb and flow. During remissions, symptoms may be mild or disappear altogether.

Who’s at Risk?

Scientists have identified a number of risk factors that bolster the likelihood of developing MS, including the following:

Genetics

Genetic predisposition boosts the like-

lihood of developing MS. But research also shows that “inheriting genetic risk factors for multiple sclerosis is not sufficient to cause this demyelinating disease of the central nervous system; exposure to environmental risk factors is also required. MS may be preventable if these unidentified environmental factors can be avoided.” (*Proc Nutr Soc* 2000;59:531-5.)

Vertebral Subluxation

There’s evidence that **vertebral subluxation** — a condition sparked by restriction or misalignment of spinal bones (vertebrae) — may play a role in the development of MS as well as Parkinson’s disease (PD). Stress, repetitive strain, desk work and physical trauma are common causes of vertebral subluxation.

After reviewing the cases of 81 patients diagnosed with either MS or PD, Erin L. Elster, D.C., noted that over 95 percent recalled experiencing head or neck (cervical) trauma before developing their respective disease. She concluded that “a causal link between trauma-induced upper cervical injury and disease onset for both MS and PD appears to exist.” (*JVSR* 2004:1-9.)

The good news? After administering treatment to correct patients’ upper cervical injuries, 91 percent of MS cases and 92 percent of PD cases “showed symptomatic improvement and no further disease progression during the care period.”

Dr. Guillet corrects vertebral subluxations with safe and gentle maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**. This not only restores the spine, but also frees the nervous system from subluxation interference so that it can function properly.

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In the case of a 32-year-old man with MS and numbness from the waist down, neurological evaluation and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) revealed vertebral subluxation. After just one visit to the chiropractor, however, the patient reported complete absence of symptoms. “The relative risk-to-benefit ratio suggests that this approach may be appropriate as an alternative symptom management approach for MS patients.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1993;16:595-600.)

Similar results were obtained by a 47-year-old woman who experienced her first MS symptoms at the age of 44.

After three years of leg weakness, loss of bladder control and pain — and no relief from drugs — the patient sought chiropractic care. Upon examination, the doctor discovered evidence of an upper cervical subluxation. (The patient had sustained a fall 10 years earlier.)

After four months of upper-cervical chiropractic care, all of the patient’s MS symptoms vanished. Two years later, she was still symptom-free. Additional MRIs, thermographic scans and neurological evaluations (by the patient’s neurologist) all suggested that “the intervention of upper-cervical chiropractic care may have stimulated a reversal in the progression of multiple sclerosis.” (*JVSR* 2001;4:22-30.)

Exposure to Toxins

Exposure to pesticides, herbicides and other solvents may enhance the risk of developing MS. Exposure to solvents used in various industries may also spawn MS (*Epidemiology* 2002;13:718-20).

Stress

Psychological stress may play a role in the development of MS, according to researchers in Denmark. Although studies have, overall, been quite limited, the Danish researchers focused on bereaved parents and revealed a direct link between the stress associated with losing a child and future development of MS (*Neurology* 2004;62:726-9).

EBV

The Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which causes infectious mononucleosis (IM),

is also a potential risk factor linked to MS. According to the authors of a recently published article, “EBV cannot stand alone as a causal factor of MS, but is likely to play an indirect role as an activator of the underlying disease process.” (*Int MS J* 2006;13:52-7.)

According to researchers at Harvard University, enduring a bout of IM raises adolescents’ and young adults’ risk of developing MS by 2.3 percent (*Ann Neurol* 2006;59:499-503.)

Fortunately, studies show that other well-known viruses are not linked with MS. The viruses responsible for measles, rubella, mumps, varicella, pertussis and scarlet fever are “not associated with increased risk of multiple sclerosis later in life.” (*Brain* 2004;127:2491-7.)

Prevent MS

If you’ve experienced any of the risk factors associated with MS, don’t panic. Remember: Environmental factors don’t necessarily “cause” MS. However, if a person has a genetic susceptibility to the disease, these opportunistic factors can trip an invisible switch that activates it. The key is to minimize your risk. The following are a few additional steps you can take to help ward off this disease.

Discover Vitamin D

Vitamin D is abundant in a variety of foods, such as eggs, cod-liver oil, sardines and salmon. (Just remember to select fish captured in the wild, uncontaminated waters.)

Milk and other dairy products are in a separate category because they must be fortified with vitamin D to give them their extra nutritional boost. Exposure to sunlight also helps the human body generate its own modest supply of vitamin D.

Vitamin D deficiency has long been linked to an elevated risk of developing MS. Which is why it’s no surprise that researchers have discovered that “MS rates are highest in regions lacking sunlight.” (*Ann Pharmacother* 2006;40:Pub.)

The same researchers also suggest that “supplementation may help prevent the development of MS and may be a useful addition to therapy.” In the study, vitamin D supplementation was associated with a 40 percent reduction in the risk of developing MS.

Consider Curcumin

The spice turmeric — used extensively in Indian food, such as curries — contains a secret weapon against MS and protects against a host of other diseases: the chemical curcumin. It’s curcumin that gives turmeric its bright yellow color and zesty flavor.

When researchers at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., administered curcumin to mice bred to develop MS-like symptoms, the results were astounding. While a second group of mice who were not given curcumin developed severe paralysis, the curcumin-fed mice remained symptom free (*J Immunol* 2002;15:6506-13).

Slash Stress

Stress is a well-known instigator of numerous diseases and disorders: from cancer to the common cold. It may also play a role in MS. Practicing stress-busting techniques — like yoga, meditation, prayer and exercise — can truly be a lifesaver.

Stop Smoking

Researchers from Harvard University suggest that cigarette smoking amplifies the risk of MS. “The relative rate increased significantly with cumulative exposure to smoking.” (*Am J Epidemiol* 2001;154:69-74.)

Note: Talk with your doctor of chiropractic or other health-care professional before beginning any supplementation program.

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