

The Helpful Role of Nutrition in Chiropractic Outcomes

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“You can’t out-adjust, out-exercise or out-anything a poor diet.” ~ Dr. John Sullivan, DC, Independence Chiropractic

Research shows that pain associated with inflammation and/or autoimmune conditions can be reduced with dietary changes.¹ Excessive weight contributes to lower extremity pain, as well as conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. And pain that is caused by injury – work-related or sports-related – typically involves inflammation. However, treatment protocols for joint and muscle pain often only include chiropractic adjustments and manipulation.

In a survey of New York Chiropractors, over 80% of those surveyed use nutrition in their practice. Nutritional support assists in the management of obesity, diabetes, allergies, heart health and musculoskeletal disorders.² When people eat fast food, they miss out on essential nutrients such as vitamins B₁, B₆, vitamin E, calcium, iron, potassium, biotin, zinc, magnesium, fiber, and essential fatty acids. Therefore, nutrition may be a missing component in facilitating a patient’s healing and his positive outcome.

Chiropractic solutions

Adjustments and massage treat inflammatory conditions, and recovery from injuries and injured tissues require collagen for proper healing. Essential nutrients such as vitamin C and B₆ contribute to healthy collagen. Patients can be part of their own solution because what they put into their bodies affects the way their body functions and moves. Nutritional programs that help reduce inflammation also help with weight management. For overweight patients, taking pressure off the body benefits musculoskeletal health and can promote disease prevention.

Chiropractors who treat sports injuries also have the opportunity to maximize outcomes with nutritional guidance. “It is the position of the American Dietetic Association, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine that physical activity, athletic performance, and recovery from exercise are enhanced by optimal nutrition. These organizations

recommend appropriate selection of food and fluids, timing of intake, and supplement choices for optimal health and exercise performance.”³ Recovery from sports injuries is simply a higher level of recovery than from an intense workout.

Nutritional needs evolve as the body functions better. So chiropractors must monitor and re-evaluate patient needs, just as they monitor and continually re-evaluate physical structure and movement.

According to Dr. Kyle Daigle, DC, of Ultimate Performance Sports & Rehabilitation, “The standard American diet is full of refined sugars, highly processed carbohydrates, artificial flavorings and food additives, which creates a great burden to the immune system and can cause interferences in the nervous system.

“A comprehensive whole food supplement can combat most of those nutrient deficiencies. Muscles, joints and ligaments need nutrients; and, if we are not getting them from our daily diets, we need supplementation.

“To top things off, even if we do our best to make good food choices, we’re not guaranteed to get the quality nutrition we need partly due to the fact that our soil has been depleted by over farming. All reasons why supplementation is so important.”

Foods that fight inflammation

Patients who make dietary modifications give their bodies the best opportunity for success when combined with chiropractic adjustments. Dr. Frank Hu, professor of nutrition and epidemiology in the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health says, “Many experimental studies have shown that components of foods and beverages may have anti-inflammatory effects.”⁴ Foods that reduce the risk of inflammation include those that have high amounts of natural antioxidants and polyphenols such as:

- Blueberries
- Apples
- Leafy green vegetables like kale, spinach, and collard greens

Other foods that fight inflammation are those often associated with a Mediterranean diet:

- Tomatoes
- Olive oil
- Almonds and walnuts
- Fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines)

Patients should avoid processed foods that increase inflammation, such as:

- Refined carbohydrates (white bread, pastries)
- Fried foods (French fries)
- Soda
- Processed meat (lunch meat, hot dogs, sausage)

Why both adjustments and nutrition?

Core chiropractic philosophy is treating the whole body. Nutrition and chiropractic work together in order to reach clients' overall goals. Nutrition fuels the body for movement, and supporting tissues must be flexible for manipulations to take effect and not default to old habits.

Though a majority of chiropractors offer nutritional supplements in their practices, many just don't have the time to do in-depth nutritional counseling. Chiropractic doctors must use every available minute of an appointment to help clients get the results they want. However, uncertainty in the current climate of healthcare and insurance makes wellness an urgent priority. Chiropractors have an opportunity to help patients through knowledge and understanding of nutritional choices and supplementation.

References:

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