

Treatment Recommendations

by James G. Halvorson, DC, DACAN

ACUTE CARE: If you have a sudden onset of pain, suspect **SWELLING** and do the following to decrease inflammation and pain:

- **ICE**—apply ice to the painful area for 10-15 minutes (every hour if needed). Bathing with Epsom salts may reduce swelling as well.
- **EXERCISE**—stay active if you can. Mild, gentle range-of-motion exercises help pump out inflammatory fluid. Early active exercise can also inhibit the formation of scar tissue. Stop any exercise that causes sharp pain.
- **ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET**—to reduce swelling—try natural anti-inflammatories (fish oils, Turmeric).
- **SPINAL MANIPULATION**—Spinal manipulation restores motion to the joint and the subsequent pumping effect can help reduce swelling and pain. I have often compared the fixation in the joint to a **thorn that is stuck in your foot**. If you try exercising and notice that your pain gets worse, go to the chiropractor to be assessed and treated for spinal joint dysfunction/fixation. **Manipulating the fixed joint is like pulling out the thorn**. Guidelines recommend getting manipulation within 1 month of onset of symptoms.

POST-ACUTE CARE: Do this even when you don't have symptoms—it is like "**Brushing and Flossing**" your teeth.

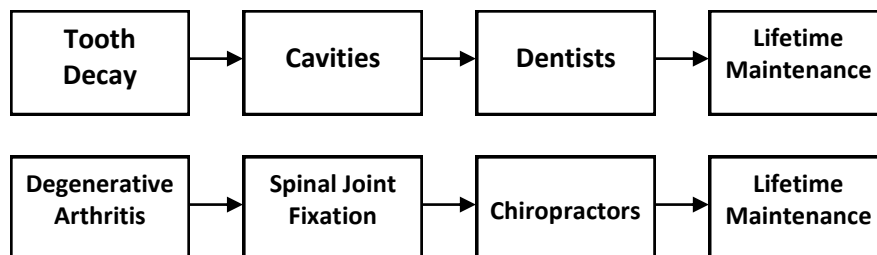
- **EXERCISE:** Daily—walking, hiking, swimming, bicycling, dancing, yoga—try to get out and move 30-60 minutes every day.
- **STRETCHING:** Daily—periodically throughout the day. Good for the muscles and the joints.
- **PRESSURE POINT THERAPY or MYOFASCIAL RELEASE:** Daily—take breaks throughout the day to massage your trouble spots.
- **NUTRITION:** Eat foods that decrease inflammation and avoid foods that promote inflammation—**The Anti-Inflammatory Diet**.
- **HEAT:** Can be done on a daily basis—it is wonderful therapy for tight, achy muscles.
- **PROPER POSTURE and BODY MECHANICS:** for various activities of daily living (ADLs)—including sitting, bending, and lifting.
- **CORE STRENGTHENING:** 3-4 times a week. This is essential because of the inherent weakness of the scar tissue.
- **SPINAL MANIPULATION:** Can help prevent exacerbations of pain and keep the spine functioning optimally.

MAINTENANCE CARE: **There is no cure for tooth decay.** Because of this fact, we have been taught how to take care of our teeth even when we don't have symptoms. There are **3 major things that we are supposed to do and they are all equally important: brush, floss, and go to the dentist**. The brushing and flossing is to be done 2-3 times per day (and **order doesn't matter**). The goal is to never get a toothache.

Likewise, **there is no cure for spinal decay.** **Our spines are degenerating (or decaying) a little bit every day and no one is brushing and flossing!** I propose that there are **3 major things that we should do (again, all equally important)** but in this case, I think **order DOES matter**. Remember, the fixation is like a thorn stuck in your foot. If you start the exercise program before pulling out the thorns, you may exacerbate your symptoms. We should start this program when we are young and do it even when we don't have symptoms. The goal should be to never get back pain. **The 3 things that I recommend for the health of the spine are:**

1. **Go to a chiropractor and get checked and treated for spinal joint dysfunction/fixation.**
2. **Do exercises that promote muscular relaxation (walking, stretching and myofascial release with the tennis balls).**
3. **Do strengthening exercises to strengthen and stabilize the spine.**

Research has shown that joint manipulation done on a regular basis and in the absence of symptoms helps maintain the health and function of the spine ([Senna Study on Maintenance](#)). Enhancing joint motion may also inhibit the progression of degeneration in the joint.



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Spinal Exercises

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STRETCHING: DAILY—Hold the stretches for 10-15 seconds at a time. Always stretch both sides.



Neck Stretches



Leg Across



Seated with a twist



Leaning into the stretch



Extension



Hamstring Stretch



Knee to Chest with Leg in Front



Kneeling Lunge Stretch (for tight hip flexors)

CORE STRENGTHENING and STABILIZATION EXERCISES: AT LEAST 3X/WEEK



Bridges



One-Legged Bridges



Planks



Side Planks



Bird Dog



Air Squats

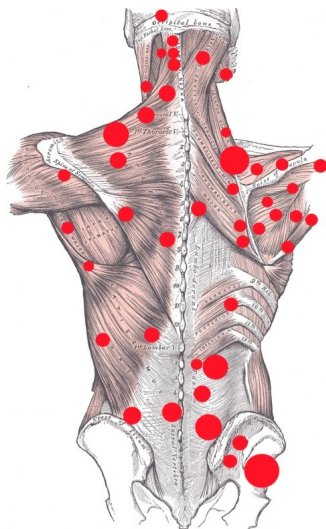


Lunges



Side Lunges

PRESSURE POINT THERAPY (Myofascial Release): Myofascial trigger points are hyperirritable spots in the fascia surrounding skeletal muscle. They are associated with palpable nodules in taut bands of muscle fibers. One of the best ways to treat them is with massage or pressure. Lie on or lean back against tennis balls, softballs or baseballs (putting them into a long sock will help hold them together and allow you to reach all areas of the spine).



Common Trigger Points



Tennis Ball



Softball or baseball if you like more pressure



Omni Massage Rollers



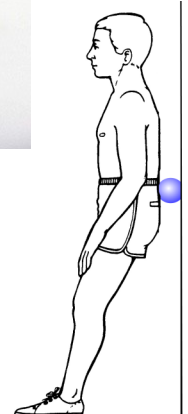
TheraCane



Styrofoam roller on Piriformis



Stick Massager



Use the ball up against the wall