



Health News

from Ponte Vedra Wellness Center

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Children and Chronic Pain

Your chiropractor will confirm that chronic pain is a widespread but often under-reported health problem. Its impact on society is enormous. In the US alone, the costs are approaching \$600 billion annually (healthcare and lost productivity).¹ What has come as a surprise to many medical researchers is the amount of children who suffer from chronic pain conditions. The American Pain Foundation reports up to 30 percent of children and adolescents endure chronic pain, which generally peaks in kids around 14 -15 years of age.²

Various medical associations and institutes have different definitions as to what constitutes chronic pain but generally it is described as pain that continues well beyond the normal healing stage of acute pain. Chronic pain can be continuous or it can be episodic. While diseases, such as arthritis, can contribute to the emergence of chronic pain, sometimes the cause can be a complete mystery. The most prevalent pain condition in kids is headache - other pain problems noted are abdominal pain and musculoskeletal pain.

A 2011 Canadian medical study reviewed research published in the last 20 years on children and chronic pain, and it revealed the problem is affecting more kids than ever before. The review also indicates girls experience chronic pain more often than boys; however, the reasons for this remain unclear. The research reviewers noted that social

and psychological factors may influence the development of chronic pain, including "anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and low socioeconomic status."³

"We found that persistent and recurrent chronic pain is overwhelmingly prevalent in children and adolescents, with girls generally experiencing more pain than boys and prevalence rates increasing with age," said lead investigator Sara King, PhD, "Findings such as these argue that researchers and clinicians should be aware of the problem and the long-term consequences of chronic pain in children."³

Chronic Pain Treatment Can Be a Challenge

Just like adults, children may suffer additional disadvantages as a result of chronic pain. They are more likely to miss school, avoid or withdraw from extracurricular activities and develop mental health problems.



Exercise of the Week

Seated Glute Stretch (Figure 4)

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Seated on a chair.

Exercise: Place one ankle on opposite knee. Then, bend forward until you feel a good stretch in hip. Also relax lower back in this position. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



Despite the increasing rate of chronic pain among children, there are a number of obstacles that make treating kids for this health condition a challenge. Young children may not have the verbal skills to express their pain. Even when they can, kids may want to avoid seeing a doctor and so don't share their pain with parents. Without verbal cues from their children, parents may not notice chronic pain issues as many kids can carry on normally. However, consistent untreated pain in childhood boosts the risk of numerous health problems emerging in adulthood.

As well, physicians may not be knowledgeable in the management of long-term pain in children. Chronic pain treatment is more often associated with adults – as increases in age make this type of health problem more likely to develop.



Clues for Parents

What can a parent do to detect pain problems in his or her child? Keep an eye open for some of these behaviors...

- Changes to appetite
- Changes to sleep patterns
- Weight loss
- Irritability
- Avoiding social activities
- Less physically active
- Fever
- Sweating
- Flushed skin
- Shallow or fast breathing

If your child shows these symptoms, ask him if he is in pain and where the pain occurs in his body, and then consult your chiropractor or pediatrician

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Your chiropractor knows pain is often intimately linked to your body's central nervous system. For example, when you experience nerve interference in the spine (subluxations), extra irritation to the nervous system could cause a signal that is interpreted as pain, when normally the same signal would not in the absence of subluxations. By correcting the subluxation, your chiropractor normalizes nervous system tone. This is why it is important to have regular adjustments to help keep your nervous system in optimal condition and prevent pain before it starts!

Quote to Inspire

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

Helen Keller

References and sources:

1. AAPM Facts and Figures on Pain – American Academy of Pain Medicine, website.
2. Pain Conditions in Children – American Pain Foundation, website.
3. The Epidemiology of Chronic Pain in Children and Adolescents Revisited: A Systematic Review -PAIN, 2011; 152 (12): 2729 DOI: 10.1016/j.pain.2011.07.016.

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