



# Health News

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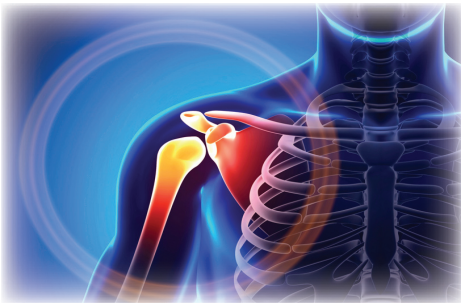
Family Chiropractic Care  
in Ponte Vedra Beach & Nocatee Town Center

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## CHIROPRACTIC FROM HEAD TO TOE – SHOULDER PAIN

**T**he shoulder is a very unique and complex joint. It is the only articulation in the body whose stability is granted primarily by muscular balance instead of being held together by the integrity of its ligaments. Have you ever heard of the ROTATOR CUFF? This is the collection of four shoulder muscles that help perform this function: namely the supraspinatus, the infraspinatus, the teres minor and subscapularis.



In addition, there are multiple bones that come together to make up the shoulder joint: the humerus (upper arm), the scapula (the shoulder blade) and the clavicle (the collar bone). Therefore, problems with the alignment of any of these bones will directly affect shoulder function, potentially leading to dysfunction and painful symptoms in this joint. Finally, many nerves lead to the shoulder, influencing motor control of the shoulder and

providing sensory feedback from the shoulder to the brain. The main source of these nerves is the cervical spine (the neck).

### How Chiropractic Helps Shoulders

So, how can your chiropractor help when you have a shoulder problem? Just like every other joint in the body, the shoulder works best when all its moving parts are in proper alignment. As you will discover below, the most important factor contributing to the proper function of the shoulder is the alignment of your spine, with each major area of the spine contributing in a significant way to the health of your shoulder.

First and foremost, since nerves connected directly to the shoulder originate in your neck, the cervical spine is the first area your chiropractor will check when you have pain in your shoulder. Vertebral subluxations in your cervical spine can cause impingement or irritation of joints, nerves and soft tissues. If the subluxation in your neck is irritating a nerve, you may experience motor (muscle) or sensory (skin) deficits related to this subluxation. Your chiropractor can test the integrity of your shoulder muscles to see if a muscle weakness correlates to the same vertebra level as the subluxation in the neck or, your chiropractor may notice that your pain patterns follow the specific pathway that mirrors the dermatome of a sensory nerve from your neck. If either or both of these are present, a cervical subluxation is likely the cause of your shoulder problem.



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## Shoulder Function and Alignment

Second, since your shoulder blades rest on the ribcage, alignment of the thoracic spine and the ribs are also influential for proper shoulder function. One of the most common causes of shoulder impingement is poor posture, which in turn may be caused by upper back misalignment. When the upper back is too rounded, for example, shoulder blade position is altered and the shoulder joint will shift forward. If this ‘slumped’ posture exists, over time this may contribute to muscle imbalance around the shoulder, leading to stress and strain. Rotator cuff strain is a common complaint related to poor posture in this area. Thoracic subluxations can be both the cause, and the effect, of this problem.

Third, although it may seem unlikely, alignment of the lumbar spine is also important when it comes to shoulder health. Why? For two main reasons:

1. The lower back curve sets the posture of the rest of the spine. If the lumbar spine is curved too much or too little, the thoracic and cervical curves will be directly affected, which in turn can affect the shoulder
2. One of the larger muscles of the upper torso, the latissimus dorsi, connects to the arm near the shoulder and then at its other end to the lower back and pelvis through the thoracolumbar fascia.

Therefore, lower back alignment can affect the function of the shoulder, and vice-versa. With a spine free of subluxations, your shoulders have the best chance to move properly, be positioned properly, and, as a result, to be pain-free.

Chiropractic adjustments, aimed at removing vertebral subluxations from all areas of your spine, are one of the most effective tools you can use to keep the stress and strain away from your shoulders. So, the next time you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders, call on your chiropractor to lighten the load!