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In Good Hands

A Free Monthly Newsletter for The Friends and Patients of
Performance Health Center

“The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good.” ~ *Samuel Johnson*

Research Shows Torn Knee Ligaments Heal Without Surgery – *Does Your Body Relieve Back Pain The Same Way?*

Natick - If you suffer with low back pain, you are about to discover some very important information about potential causes and treatments. But first, researchers have discovered something very important you should know about "anterior cruciate ligament" (ACL) injuries...

The ACL is one of the major supporting ligaments of the knee. You may or may not know, but one of the most feared injuries an athlete (or anyone else) can suffer from is a torn ACL.

When it is torn, the knee is usually left unstable. In other words, the ACL ligament helps keep the bones of the knee joint together. When there is a tear, the bones can actually separate or dislocate. This can happen when an athlete or person lands from a jump, tries to stop or attempts to change directions suddenly. Sometimes, the knee will just “give out” without warning while simply walking.

When a knee is injured, an MRI is often used to help diagnose the problem. If the MRI shows a torn ACL, it has been common practice for most doctors to recommend surgery to replace the ACL with either a cadaver ACL or one made from the person’s own patellar tendon, or Hamstring tendon.

This is MAJOR surgery with extensive and lengthy rehabilitation. Even an athlete in his or her physical prime may not be able to resume their sport for a minimum of six months.

Surgery for a torn ACL has been the common treatment because it was believed that once an ACL was torn, it could not heal. Now researchers say this is not true.

In fact, in a study that appeared online before its publication in the journal *Knee Surgery Sports Traumatology Arthroscopy*, researchers at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York found that surgery shouldn't be the first option for some cases. They found solid evidence that the ACL can, in fact, heal itself WITHOUT surgery.

According to Robert Marx, MD, an orthopedic surgeon in the Sports Medicine and Shoulder Service at Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS), *"Some patients who tear their ACL while skiing can get away without surgery. Their ligament heals by itself, they will have stable knees, and they will be able to do whatever they want, including skiing. It is a huge deal to avoid surgery."*

Dr. Marx also stated that patients who tear their ACL during recreational skiing should not rush into surgery. They should wait 6-12 weeks and be re-evaluated unless there is another obvious reason for surgery.

The study found two orthopedic tests that should be performed by a skilled physician to determine if the patient will need surgery or if the ACL can heal without it.

These two tests are "Lachman" and "pivot shift test." These tests assess the integrity of the ACL, and if these two tests are negative, a good

outcome and normal knee anterior laxity at more than 2 years after the injury is expected... without surgery.

A quick and important side note about this study: It was performed on recreational Alpine skiers. Researchers noted that ACL tears from skiing are often less traumatic than other sports. For example, the level of knee injury can be much greater in football or soccer.

This does not mean that an ACL tear from these sports cannot heal without surgery; it means THIS PARTICULAR STUDY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. Of course, not all ACL tears in football, soccer, and similar sports are super traumatic. The answer is to have your knee examined by a qualified and skilled physician who is up-to-date on the research and will assess your knee and give you the best recommendation for your individual case.

What Does All This Have To Do With Back Pain?

A lot, actually. There are two very big take home messages from the information above.

First, doctors are not always right. The best doctors use the best and most current research in an attempt to give the patient the best recommendations and treatments possible.

That is, of course, limited to the current research. No matter what some people think, science (and research) is not magic. It does not have all the answers, especially when it comes to the complexities of the human body.

The ability of the ACL to heal itself is a great example, but it is not the only one.

The body is truly amazing, and one of the most amazing things is its incomprehensible ability to heal itself.

Often, this means doing less, not more. This is one of the most difficult things for injured or sick people to understand.

When sick or injured, many people believe something must be done or the more treatment, the better. In reality, in many cases, the less the doctor does and the quicker he or she gets out of the way, the better.

This Is Often The Best Option For Back And Neck Pain

Many Chiropractors are proud that their treatments help back and neck pain. This, however, is not true. If you understand how the body works and its amazing ability to heal itself, you will also understand that the reason why some Chiropractors have so much success with back and neck pain is because they simply do as little as possible and then get out of the way and let the body do its magic.

They understand that their “treatments” do not get rid of pain. Their “treatments” simply remove a roadblock or roadblocks the body had to healing itself.

That’s why they will recommend the LEAST treatments possible and re-evaluate. Their goal is to get you out of pain and out of their office as fast as possible... not commit you to huge and expensive treatment plans that last months or even years.

Of course, some patients have more serious causes of back or neck pain and need more care. Every case is individual and should be approached that way. But the results can be incredible if your Chiropractor simply removes the roadblock, steps aside, and lets the REAL healer take over.

Study Finds Headaches Associated With Back Pain

A German study published in the Dec. 28, 2012 issue of *Pain* has found an association between both chronic migraine and chronic tension-type headaches with low back pain.

According to the study, the odds of having frequent low back pain were between 13.7 and 18.3 times higher in all chronic headache types when compared to those with no headaches. In other words, the odds of having low back pain are much higher if you have chronic migraine or chronic tension-type headaches.

Researchers mention nerve pathways as a possible explanation. But, one must not overlook the possibility of an unbalanced and malfunctioning spine as a possible cause of the headaches. If this is true, it would explain why so many chiropractors report success treating headaches.

And remember, if you ever have any questions or concerns about your health, talk to us. Contact us with your questions. We are here to help and enjoy participating in your life long good health.

This information is solely advisory, and should not be substituted for medical or chiropractic advice. Any and all health care concerns, decisions, and actions must be done through the advice and counsel of a healthcare professional who is familiar with your updated medical history. We cannot be held responsible for actions you may take without a thorough exam or appropriate referral. If you have any further concerns or questions, please call our office at (508) 655-9008.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome – What Makes My Hands Numb?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) sufferers frequently report a cluster of symptoms, but almost all have one symptom in common – numbness, usually in digits 2-4 on palm-side of the hand. CTS is usually attributed to an over-use type of injury such as repetitive work including (but not limited to): typing, assembly work, packaging jobs, machine operators, and many more. So where is this numbness coming from?

To answer this, let's review the anatomy: The carpal tunnel is made up of 8 small "carpal bones" that form an arch or tunnel, and the base of the tunnel is formed from the transverse carpal ligament. There are nine tendons that attach muscles in the forearm to each finger and work when we grip or form a fist with our hand. Wiggle your fingers and look at your wrist and forearm – do you see all the activity or movement going on?

The tendons travel through sheaths which help lubricate the sliding tendons. When we move our fingers fast (such as typing, playing piano, performing assembly work, etc.), friction and heat builds up, resulting in swelling. If adequate rest does not occur, the increased pressure from the swollen tendons end up squeezing all the contents within the tunnel, which includes the median nerve. It's the median nerve pinch that results in the numbness, tingling, and/or pain into the index, third and fourth fingers.

There are other conditions that can either complicate or cause CTS. These include: hypothyroid disease (due to myxedema), diabetes (due to neuropathy), inflammatory arthritis (of which there are several kinds - rheumatoid is the most common), and entrapment of the nerve either in the neck, shoulder, elbow or forearm (called double or multiple crush syndrome).

The reason chiropractic, especially with Active Release Techniques, helps so much is that we can alleviate the pressure and tension on the nerve from the neck down to the wrist and restore proper nerve function. This alleviates the multiple sleep interruptions, weakness in the grip that is so common, as well as helping to restore the nerve's function. Many studies support the success of chiropractic and CTS – try it first as surgery should be the last resort.

We realize you have a choice in who you consider for your health care provision and we sincerely appreciate your trust in choosing our service for those needs. If you, a friend or family member require care for CTS, we would be honored to render our services.

See You at the Boston Marathon

As is our tradition we will be on the Marathon Route providing "as needed" care to our many runners we have had the pleasure to work with as they trained for the 117th Boston Marathon, and also for members of *Marathon Strides Against MS Team*. Find us on the right side at mile 10.7 in Natick and on the left side at mile 21.1 in Newton Centre!