

# Joint Dysfunction

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In order for muscles, ligaments, tendons, and other soft tissues to remain healthy, normal joint function has been shown to be essential. Traditionally sports coaches and trainers have concerned themselves with two types of joint movement: active and passive. Sports injuries have received the classic diagnosis of sprained ligaments, tendonitis, torn cartilage, fractures, etc., and most have accepted the limitations of the classic approach taken by medicine.

How does the chiropractic approach differ? The chiropractic rationale for joint manipulation is based upon the biomechanical and physiological function as joints. Chiropractors recognize another type of joint motion, defined as joint play. Joint play is described as the specific movement that occurs outside or at the end of the normal active and passive movement. The absence of this specific joint movement leads to abnormal joint function defined by the chiropractor as JOINT DYSFUNCTION. There lies a direct relationship between this joint function and athletic performance.

The voluntary action of muscles depends on normal joint play. If normal specific joint play movements are not present, range of active motion is lessened. Muscles cannot be trained to their full potential if they cannot fully extend and shorten. Despite the use of stretching exercises, certain athletes find that some muscles just do not loosen up properly. One reason for this aggravating problem is that exercise and stretching cannot restore the loss of joint play. Rehabilitation of this condition requires specific manipulation of the joint, correcting altered biomechanics.

The major cause of a loss of joint play is previous injury. Someone with joint dysfunction symptoms will often experience symptoms only during or after certain activities, usually with no swelling but frequent stiffness. Too often, a specific diagnosis is not made by the attending physician. Ongoing joint dysfunction cause compensation and increasing stress within the joint. Recent research has validated the effects on limited joint motion, which produce pain and hypertonicity (tightness) of the muscles that move the affected joint. It would seem obvious that all athletes and those with joint or muscle pain should have an examination by a chiropractor to ensure that joint play is normal. This evaluation is especially important after any injury. With proper diagnosis and care, athletes could reap the benefits which would include improved range of motion, normal muscle function, improved coordination, better balance and fewer performance injuries.

In closing, we should remember that physical performance is dependent upon coordinated movements being normal. Anyone with chronic pain or any serious athlete should be examined by a sport-oriented chiropractor to ensure normal joint function; eliminating wasted time, money and careers.

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