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SPINE HEALTH

Understanding Your Spine

Your Body's Command Center

A guide to spinal anatomy and how chiropractic care supports long-term spinal health.

A free patient education guide from our doctors
(630) 289-2225 · freedomwellness.llc · Hoffman Estates, IL

Welcome

Your spine does more work than almost any other structure in your body. It holds you upright, lets you bend and twist, absorbs shock with every step, and protects the spinal cord, the information highway between your brain and the rest of your body.

Yet most of us never think about our spine until it hurts. This guide will help you understand how your spine is built, why it matters, and what you can do to keep it healthy for life.

The Architecture of the Spine

Your spine is made of 24 movable vertebrae, plus the sacrum and tailbone at the base. They are grouped into three main regions:

- **Cervical spine (neck):** 7 vertebrae that support your head and allow wide range of motion
- **Thoracic spine (mid-back):** 12 vertebrae that anchor your ribs and protect vital organs
- **Lumbar spine (low back):** 5 large vertebrae that carry most of your body weight

Seen from the side, a healthy spine has three gentle curves forming an S-shape. These curves work like a spring, distributing load and absorbing shock far better than a straight column could.

Discs, Joints, and Nerves

Between most vertebrae sit intervertebral discs, tough outer rings surrounding a gel-like center. Discs cushion the bones and allow movement. Behind them, small facet joints guide how each segment glides and rotates.

Exiting between the vertebrae are spinal nerves that branch out to your muscles, skin, and organs. When joints lose normal motion, or surrounding tissues become irritated, those nerves and the muscles around them can be affected, which is often where symptoms like pain, tightness, or tingling come from.

What Throws the Spine Off Balance?

Spinal problems rarely appear out of nowhere. Most develop gradually from everyday stresses:

- Long hours of sitting and screen time
- Repetitive lifting, twisting, or one-sided activities
- Old injuries, falls, or car accidents
- Inactivity and weak core muscles
- Poor sleep positions or an unsupportive mattress
- Chronic stress, which increases muscle tension

How Chiropractic Care Helps

Chiropractic care focuses on restoring healthy motion and function to the spine and surrounding joints. Through specific adjustments, soft tissue work, and targeted exercises, our doctors aim to reduce irritation, improve mobility, and help your body move the way it was designed to.

Clinical guidelines for low back and neck pain recognize spinal manipulation as a reasonable option, especially when combined with exercise and staying active. Our goal is not just short-term relief but helping you build a spine that stays resilient.

Daily Habits for a Healthier Spine

- Move every 30 to 45 minutes when sitting
- Walk daily; it nourishes discs and joints
- Strengthen your core and hips two to three times a week
- Lift with your legs and keep loads close to your body
- Sleep on your back or side with proper pillow support
- Stay hydrated; discs rely on water

Did You Know?

Your discs have very limited blood supply. They get much of their nourishment through movement, which is one reason staying active is so important for spinal health.

Spine Health Self-Check

- ☐ I can turn my head fully in both directions without pain
- ☐ I can touch my knees or shins comfortably when bending
- ☐ I sit for less than an hour at a time
- ☐ I wake up without stiffness most mornings
- ☐ I exercise at least three days a week
- ☐ My shoulders look level in the mirror

Common Questions

Is it normal for my back to crack?

Occasional painless cracking is usually harmless. Frequent cracking with pain is worth an evaluation.

Can I improve my posture as an adult?

Yes. Consistent habits, exercise, and care can make meaningful changes at any age.

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Let's get you feeling your best again.

Want to know how your spine is really doing? Schedule a spinal evaluation at (630) 289-2225 or freedomwellness.llc/book.

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