



## December Newsletter



The holiday season is filled with joy, happiness and fun. But, it can also be filled with a lot of stress. There are a lot of different types of stress and a lot of different ways that it can manifest. Stress can manifest as pain in the body, or increase pain that you are already experiencing. Chiropractors can help patients find patterns in their lifestyles that may be contributing to their stress and pain. They can also help identify ways to adapt your current habits or routines to place less stress on your joints and your life.

One possible way we are putting unneeded stress on our bodies is through the way we exercise. Your chiropractor can tell you what type of exercise best suits you before you embark on a new regimen. They can also help work with you to identify areas of weakness to work on and activities you should avoid. Changing from a high impact exercise routine to a lower impact one can go a long way in helping your body feel energized and pain free. A workout is low impact if at least one of your feet remains in contact with the ground at all times for example walking, and skating. Water aerobics, swimming, cycling and using an elliptical machine, put even less stress on your joints than the previous mentioned low impact exercises because both feet stay on the ground at all times and your body is supported during movement. A workout is considered high impact if both feet leave the ground at the same time for example running, skipping, and plyometric workouts.

Another source of stress this time of year can be the weather and decreased amount of sunlight. You go outside, only to find your hands freezing and nose running. You drive to work in the pitch-black of darkness and step outside after a long day on the job, only for it to be dark again. It can be hard to stay motivated and committed to fitness and activity during the winter months.

While it can be easy to lose sight of your activity levels until you've thawed out a little, research has shown it's important to exert yourself in the winter months. As the darkness and cold creeps in, your serotonin (or feel-good chemical) levels drop. Consistent exercise and activity is a great way to combat this. Getting up and moving in the winter also boosts immunity by keeping the lymphatic system active. Keeping in mind high and low impact exercises above here are a couple ideas to help you stay active during the winter months.

**Get outside and move.** This option embraces the cold. Ontario is full of opportunities to use the frigid weather to your advantage. Skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing or skating are all great options to keep you moving outside. You can also check what's going on locally, as most communities regularly host fun events during the winter months.



**Activity in your day-to-day life.** Being active doesn't always have to mean sweating it out. Making little, conscious decisions to get up and move can do wonders for your overall health. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Get out and shovel the snow by hand (using the correct technique, of course. If you forget what the correct technique is, just look back at last month's newsletter where we discussed snow shovelling tips). Get up from your desk and take a short walk every hour. Its little activities like these that can help break up the monotony your body can feel during the winter months.

**Join a gym.** A great indoor option is to join a gym. Joining a gym doesn't just have to mean running on a treadmill or lifting weights. A lot of fitness facilities offer a variety of indoor activities and classes for you to participate in. This may include basketball, swimming, squash, yoga, etc. This may be cost prohibitive for many, but still remains a great option.

Often during the holiday season we find ourselves driving to visit family and friends. Driving in poor weather conditions can cause stress, but also just being in the car can increase back pain for some. For those who are career drivers, like bus, taxi or delivery drivers, or even those who just live a go-go lifestyle, back pain can be an unfortunate side effect of living on the open road. Below are a few ways to help ease your pain while driving:

**Using a lumbar support** – A lumbar support, which is essentially a cushion for your lower back, can go a long way in preventing pain. You can purchase one specifically made for driving or it can be as easy as using an old couch pillow or a rolled up towel.

**Moving your seat forward** – Getting as close as you can to the steering wheel, without it being uncomfortable, is the optimal driving distance to prevent back pain. This way you aren't slouching and also not straining yourself to reach the pedals.

**Adjust your hands on the steering wheel** – We were all told by our driving instructor, "keep those hands at 10 and 2," over and over. This was definitely true when we were 16-years-old and trying to get our licence, but isn't true when we are



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looking to alleviate back pain. With the invention of airbags, research has found that your hands should be at 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock. This allows you to rest your elbows on the armrests, which can help ease pain, especially in the upper back.

**Stretching** – Stretching it out before hopping in the car is a great way to prevent driving related pains from creeping up. Getting out and stretching every hour or two will alleviate some of your pain if you know you're going to be in your car for a long time throughout the day.

You can always see your chiropractor if you are still unsure about how to prevent and alleviate back pain.

As most of you know, I have a young family and life is pretty busy for us. There are many times when I start getting stressed, or can see it start to manifest in the kids. Some of the things we try to do to combat the stress that creeps up (especially with the kids) are: Fresh air! It is amazing how some fresh air with snow angels, building a snowman, or having a snowball fight can really lighten the mood. If someone is grumpy, we start making silly faces at each other, and that usually gets everyone laughing as it often turns into a game of who can make the silliest



face. Laughter has been shown to increase serotonin (the feel good chemical in the body), so a good bout of laughter can help to relieve stress as well. When all else fails, we put some music on and have a dance party. What kid doesn't like seeing their parents being silly dancing around and singing?

 Dr. Frederick and Staff would like to wish you all the best for the Holiday Season! 

### Lorraine's Tips

With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season upon us, comes the stress that most of us encounter. Over the last number of years I have picked up some tips that I use to get me through this wonderful, joyous time of year to help beat those Holiday stressors!

**Breathing-** not just our normal everyday breathing that we need to keep us alive, but taking a deep belly breath. Letting the tummy expand all the way as you breathe in, letting the shoulders rise, and then slowly exhaling. Do this a few times and you should start to feel more relaxed.

Decorating can be tough on the body, Activities such as hanging stockings, and trimming the tree can cause sore muscles from all of the repetitive movements. Grab a cold pack, or wrap a bag of frozen peas in a towel and place on the area for 5-15 minutes and rest for a few minutes. Remember Rome wasn't built in a day! Cold is also great for those tired and achy feet if you are wearing uncomfortable high heels to all of your Christmas get-togethers. Try throwing a water bottle in the freezer and when you get home, roll your tired tootsies. The cold will help with any inflammation, and the hardness of the ice will help with any plantar fasciitis.



Sleep is also very important, and the holidays can cause us to stay up making those lists and checking them twice. So here are a few suggestions to try and help get some extra ZZZZ's;

- Putting away the electronics 30 mins before you want to go to sleep, the lights from these devices tells our brains it's not time to sleep and it may take our body's longer to go into shut down mode. Or try an alternative like reading a book before bed.
- Essential oils are great options to help us sleep, especially lavender. A couple drops onto the underside of your pillow or on the bottoms of your feet may be just what you need.
- Exercise and staying hydrated, plus this will help with any guilt of having an extra holiday treat.

If you have tried all of these stress reducers, (or none) and are still feeling the holiday pressures, another great option is book a massage! It not only will help with those tight and sore muscles, but a secondary response is relaxation!