

## **Pain, your body's alarm signal**

When we are in pain, we normally consult a health professional. Did you know that pain is the main reason for consultations? Even more if this pain forces you to change your habits and lifestyle. And did you know that pain is only the tip of the iceberg? There is often an underlying condition that needs to be addressed.

### **Defining pain**

Everybody experiences pain many times in their life. But how is pain defined, precisely? The International Association for the Study of Pain defines pain as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage”. In other words, pain is the organism's alarm signal that alerts it when its functioning and integrity are modified or reduced. There are two categories of physical pain: acute pain and chronic pain. When an event affects our morale, we call this psychological or sentimental pain.

### **Acute pain**

It is short-lived and usually lasts less than seven days. It arises after an accident, an infection or a fatigue. This pain is relieved by treating the cause. By correcting it quickly, we prevent acute pain from becoming chronic pain.

### **Chronic pain**

This is a pain that has been evolving for about 3-6 months. It persists even with regular treatments. Many causes are possible:

- Pain associated with chronic disease where we cannot completely eliminate the cause: arthritis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, etc.
- Acute pain that wasn't properly treated and that persists beyond normal healing time or that lasts more than 6 months. For example, the aftermath of a car or work accident or back pain that hasn't been properly treated.
- Pain that has an ill-defined cause: migraine headaches, fibromyalgia,...
- Phantom pain that arises following amputation. This is due to damaged nerves of the nervous system.
- Pain that is generated by the nervous system without a triggering factor, such as reflex sympathetic dystrophy.

### **Living with pain**

Living with pain beyond a few weeks leads to physical deterioration which in the long run can become irreversible. According to the World Health Organization, people who suffer from chronic pain are four times more susceptible of suffering from anxiety and depression. Between

30 and 60% of them will suffer from an episode of depression in their lifetime. Injuries such as sprains, strains or direct trauma of the back, neck, shoulders, elbows or knees may be aggravated in time. When pain persists beyond a few months, joint deterioration (osteoarthritis) settles in for most people. For the families, employers and the government (ex. CSST and SAAQ), chronic pain is expensive. In many cases, neuromusculoskeletal lesions force the victim to take time off work as well as a reduction in daily activities. On top of affecting the injured person, it also affects the family and immediate entourage. Whether acute or chronic, pain is never a symptom we should neglect and it's important to consult without delay. Your chiropractor is a first choice health professional to diagnose and treat the cause of your pain. She can propose a treatment plan that is appropriate for your fitness level, your age and your health goals. Your physical and psychological well-being is crucial: Don't wait to be in pain!

**Did you know:**

- 36% of adults suffer from chronic pain?
- Back pain costs Canadians 800 million dollars per year?
- Back pain affects 80% of people at one time or another in their lifetime?
- That back pain is the chronic condition that is the #1 cause of activity limitation in people under 45 years old?
- That it is proven that chiropractic care is safe and effective in treating back pain?
- That chronic pain can often be relieved with chiropractic care?