

[IMAGE]

View From The Top

Perspectives on Health and Wellness From Jeff Spencer, Sports Chiropractor to the Stars

By Dr. Jeff Spencer

Superstars in every area of sports and the performing arts depend on their bodies to be in top condition in order to achieve a level of excellence that is seldom attained. These top performers can afford the very best health care available.

Interestingly enough, many of them choose chiropractic care to keep their bodies in optimum health. In fact, some of these top performers actually have a personal doctor of chiropractic in attendance when they are on tour or at a specific event. There are a relatively small number of doctors who work with these superstars. They are sought out for their expertise, and their identities are not well-known.

One of these is Jeff Spencer, DC.

Dr. Spencer began his chiropractic career as did most of his colleagues. He attended chiropractic college, and after graduation, began an office practice like most doctors. But it wasn't long before he became a doctor "on call" with a very select group of patients.

Athlete standing with mountain bike. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark While he isn't able to discuss most of his patients by name, Dr. Spencer is able to provide insight into how and why chiropractic plays such a critical role in the success of many top performers. In this interview, he shares his understanding of how these superstars maintain their bodies to achieve peak performance.

When you think about the athletes or entertainers you work with; how do you see chiropractic playing a role in their success?

Well, I think it's absolutely vital because the person's ability to be a consistent top performer depends entirely on their state of health. So, by definition, it's essential to proactively address what may be silent in the body, but that can be the "time bomb" that'll blow up and lead to catastrophic loss of time and inability

to perform, and can ruin a season or career. As importantly, once the athlete or performer comes back from a tour or an extended period of significant physical work without reasonable recovery, they need to have a proven system to accelerate recovery. Chiropractic care, as well as dealing with the obvious issues of health, allows the performer and the doctor to be on the leading edge of creating and promoting wellness to ensure a long, vital and highly productive career.

How often do most of these athletes/entertainers receive chiropractic care?

It depends on the challenges associated with their profession and what the demands on their bodies are.

During periods of high concentration of activity, such as a tour or during a really difficult period of athletic training or competition, they may receive daily care or more; it just depends on the nature of activity.

Generally speaking, they receive as much care as they reasonably can get for the given set of circumstances, so we always build into our objectives the ability to address what needs come up for them during the course of training, competing or performing.

For example, in the Tour de France, I would treat Lance Armstrong and his team twice a day - once before they went out to race and once when they came back from the race. Same thing with performers: You do it once before they go out on stage and once after. That way, you're preparing them to put in a top effort, but you're also protecting their body by doing some post-performance care to support their recovery. They are able to maintain the capacity to be a top performer and always be ready to jump into action at a moment's notice.

How would that translate for a weekend athlete or someone who is just very athletic as an amateur?

What would you suggest for them? What would be a regimen that could keep them at the top of their game?

First off, their objective is to get well and stay well. If there are underlying health issues that need to be resolved to put them in a position to be involved in performances, that's the first thing that has to happen.

Once they're there, the other side of it is to be a regular wellness patient, which is probably the more important side of it, because it takes a lot less time and effort to get rid of the problem while it's small than when it's gotten very large.

I'm a big fan of the practice of proactive wellness care. At a minimum, they should see the chiropractor once a month to address all the neuromusculoskeletal issues they may not know are in their body, but

certainly could make them prone to a future injury.

If a top athlete/performer is injured, what does it take to get them back up to performance level?

Jeff Spencer and Lance Armstrong. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark It takes a comprehensive program in neuromusculoskeletal care, proper use of modalities, use of nutritional supplements, and rehabilitation. The first thing is to aggressively control pain and inflammation and accelerate tissue repair. This can and should be done using manual chiropractic adjusting strategies; nutrition to make sure the body chemistry is on board, to control pain and inflammation, and accelerate tissue repair; and the appropriate modalities to speed those aspects of physiology that are consistent with accelerating tissue repair.

There are office and home rehabilitation protocols that need to be an essential part of any program so the body can reacquire the strength, flexibility, endurance and agility to be able to perform in a three-dimensional environment. It needs to be a comprehensive program and it needs to be extremely aggressive because the longer you wait, the less chance the person has of getting back to their optimal performance. Time is an issue, so the sooner you can get on the problem, the faster they can heal.

Compare passive care and active chiropractic care. How does active chiropractic care impact how quickly patients can recover?

Passive care is mostly about pain, and just because you're pain-free doesn't mean you're well. If you heal with a random scar and create an injury forcing the body to change how you move, it shifts where the stress goes in the body, which will eventually express itself as a second injury down the line. It's only a matter of time and I see that happen all the time.

When you use active care protocols, you're accelerating the entire process, from the acute phase to the remodeling phase, to improve strength and ability to be able to do all of your daily tasks, and more. Certainly, there's a case to be made for early passive care, but that should be very quickly transitioned out of. The thing about the body is that if it only responds to the activity demanded of it and can't recuperate, the person never reacquires the skills to be a top performer, regardless of discipline. It just won't happen.

What would active chiropractic care accomplish? Could it reduce the length of recovery by 50 percent or perhaps more?

It depends on the system, but in terms of my own personal experience with the systems I use, you can get a person back to full function in probably only 25 percent of the time it normally takes through passive means. If you're only passively treating the person, you'll never get them back to pre-injury status.

The moment you have an injury, you start moving differently, and it only takes three to four days for the brain to think this new way of moving is the new normal. So, all of a sudden, the person starts moving in this new way and it puts stress on areas where it shouldn't be. There's no way you can heal to full recovery if your body adopts this new way of moving as the new normal. It just won't happen.

Can you give us a sense of some of the patients you have who have come back from injuries and have gotten back up to their top level?

Professional bicyclist. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Absolutely. I've worked with world and Olympic champions, and top performers as well. I did all seven Tour de Frances with Lance Armstrong and team. And there were a number of difficult situations that required extraordinary means to help Lance ride the way he did.

In the tours we did, we only lost two riders - one was to a broken arm and the other was to a severe concussion. We did our jobs very well and that's one of the reasons why Lance and the team won a record seven consecutive Tour de Frances.

What advice would you give to someone looking for a chiropractor who specializes in sports?

If you're looking for a sports chiropractor:

1. Look at their postgraduate education and see whether or not they have completed a course of postgraduate studies specializing in sports medicine.
2. See whether or not they have been an athlete themselves. There are certain things in the athletic world that you understand by virtue of having been a participant in a sport.
3. Make sure their approach to care is extremely broad-based and includes elements of aftercare, rehabilitation, nutrition and the use of modalities. Those are required to be able to accelerate recovery from an injury.
4. Finally, make sure the chiropractor has a strong wellness preventative program in place so the athlete has access on a regular basis, to make sure they stay well.

What are "modalities" and why are they important?

Certain modalities can do things for the body that the hands can't. You need to know what those are and use them for areas that can speed recovery to support the ability of the patient to get well as quickly as possible. The top modalities are cold laser and EFX earthing technology. I'm also a fan of frequency-specific microcurrent and kinesiotaping.

I think it's important that every doctor have a toolkit that he has access to, so when he diagnoses a patient, he can dig into his toolkit and create his treatment plan specific to the patient. Once he knows the needs of the patient, he has a toolkit to address those needs in a systematic, rational way.

How is nutrition important?

One of the elements necessary to get well as quickly as possible is biochemistry and the nutritional side of it. If you don't have the right blocks for body growth and repair and energy production, tissues heal slowly and your body doesn't have the energy to do the rehabilitation tasks.

Through a dietary analysis and the use of appropriate supplements, you can get the body's energy production and healing systems running to match and merge with therapies and modalities, to enhance the speed of recovery for an injury.

What is wellness, and how do you achieve it on a continuing basis?

My definition of wellness is to do a thorough evaluation of the patient, a battery of tests to determine where the hidden factors are in the body that are not symptomatic yet, and discharge them from the system. For example, you can have a muscle problem that can lead to an altered movement pattern that makes you vulnerable to injury. You can have a joint out of place that is affecting how the muscles talk to each other to produce coordinated movements. If the muscles can't coordinate, you're vulnerable to injury, not to mention the fact that you can't put in a top performance.

These are the things I always look for. You have the diagnostic ability to find things that are hidden in the body that the patient doesn't know are there, and then have the treatment capacity to be able to remove those things before they become symptomatic. And that's the whole purpose of a wellness visit.

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