[IMAGE]

Time for a Spinal Tuneup

By Dr. Kevin M. Wong

When you care about your car, you take it to the shop for the tuneups it needs - oil changes, tire rotations, new brakes, etc. Your spine is no different. It needs a regular "tuneup" as well, complete with chiropractic adjustments.

I bet most of you drive automobiles when running errands during a typical day. Whether we are driving to and from work, toting children to school or even going somewhere for a long weekend, our cars tend to play important roles in our lives. In an effort to make sure our cars run well, most of us try to take our vehicles in for regular "tuneups." At the typical auto shop, your car is seen by an expert who knows exactly how to keep all of the parts in working order. Thus, we can try to avoid any inconvenient breakdowns and keep up with the demands of our busy lives. We all know what happens when our cars break down: It can leave us feeling helpless!

Now that you're thinking about your car, realize there is another type of machine that works tirelessly every day to make sure you accomplish all of your tasks and duties - your body. Perhaps the most complicated machine on Earth is the human body. On a daily basis, you demand a lot from your body and it must respond to those demands, sometimes within seconds.

Man under the hood of his car tunning it up. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark As chiropractors, we are well-trained to help keep your body running as smoothly as your vehicles do. One of the most interesting comments I hear from time to time is, "I don't need to go to the chiropractor because I feel fine." This is an interesting statement and can be compared to, "I don't need my car tuned up because it runs fine." Have you ever noticed that your car may run, but it won't start when you leave the shopping mall or it breaks down on the side of the road? Perhaps we should shoot for more than "running fine."

Regardless of your current age, if you look in the mirror and really observe your standing posture, you will likely notice changes that have occurred slowly over time. It is common for people to notice a bit of a hump in their upper back, their shoulders aren't level, their necks are tilted a bit to one side or one hip appears to be higher than the other. You may even notice that the way you walk or run is different than in your younger

days.

These changes, and many others, can happen slowly over time, but that does not mean you should consider them normal or acceptable. They are silent indicators that down the road, you could have problems with your spine or other joints of the body. Compare this to the instrument panel in your car. When the "check engine" light comes on, unplugging the wire that lights it up won't help you address the problem; you are just ignoring the symptoms.

Like a car, much of the work of the human body happens without us even realizing what's going on. Our brain sends signals down the spinal cord to all parts of our body. When the body wants to move any of its parts, it contracts muscles, those muscles pull on the bones and movement happens. There cannot be muscular contraction without the bones moving in some way.

When you take your car in for a tuneup, the mechanic analyzes the inner workings of the engine and other aspects that make the car function well. The same happens when you bring your body into the chiropractor for a tuneup. Chiropractors are trained experts in the way the bones, muscles and nerves function together. We can analyze almost every single joint in your body and determine if each one is working as it should.

By analyzing different areas of the spine and extremities, we find out how the muscles and bones are doing. Sometimes, the patient may feel pain or the chiropractor may feel tightness or swelling. Our hands - along with our exam procedures - tell us a lot of information about the state of your body. From there, we can administer care that may include the use of heat, ice, massage and gentle movements of the bones back into their correct position. This movement of bones is called an adjustment. Areas such as the feet, knees, hips, shoulders, wrists (we call these extremities), spine and jaw are some examples of the territory chiropractors can cover for you.

When your bones are in proper alignment, the joints function at 100 percent, so you can have and maintain full movement. A full range of movement in the joints also serves to lubricate or "oil" them to facilitate continued movement. Chiropractic tuneups can serve three purposes:

1. **Evaluate the state of your body, even if you have no pain.**
   It's amazing how many people come into our offices "feeling fine." I guarantee you that even people who feel fine have areas of their spine or extremities that are out of normal alignment. When we adjust those bones back into place, people feel better in some way. Please do not be fooled by thinking, *If I*

am not in pain, then I must be fine. If we all thought that way, we would all wait until we needed root canals or crowns before going to the dentist!

2. **Address major or minor pains you currently have, but haven't been too worried about.**
   Have you had any nagging discomforts or pains coming from your spine or extremities? Do these discomforts prevent you from doing the activities you enjoy? Instead of wondering if the pain will continue to get worse or stay that way for the rest of your life, give chiropractic a try. You don't have to live with pain. I once asked a patient of mine if she experienced headaches, to which she replied, "Just the normal ones." There is no "normal" pain; it is usually just a symptom of another problem that should be addressed.
3. **Prevent future problems that can and likely will arise from your joints being out of alignment and not functioning at 100 percent.**
   Our society is moving toward preventative health care. Chiropractic has been at the forefront of this concept since the chiropractic profession was founded in 1895. Having your spine and extremities aligned can help you reduce or avoid major problems. Arthritis, overuse injuries (like carpal tunnel syndrome and tennis elbow), rotator cuff injuries and knee problems are just a few types of conditions that may be prevented with chiropractic care.

Doctor of Chiropractic at his desk. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Do you follow these common recommendations? Regular dental checkups every 6-12 months to keep your teeth healthy? Annual physical exams with your doctor to make sure you stay healthy and diagnose diseases or other conditions early? Regular scheduled services for your car to keep it running longer?

Scheduling chiropractic tuneups is equally important. Chiropractic tuneups allow you to take care of your body so that your machine functions as well as it possibly can. Please remember to make time to care for yourself; you are worth every penny.

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