

# Featured Article

## Riding the Brakes



### Regular Exercise and Regular Chiropractic Care

Whether you run or walk, play tennis or play basketball, lift weights or work-out with medicine balls, regular chiropractic care is an essential component of your exercise method of choice. We exercise because we want to, because we want to be healthy and well for all the years of our lives. Importantly, regular chiropractic care helps us achieve these health and wellness goals.

Regular exercise makes demands on many of our physiological systems, especially on the musculoskeletal, cardiorespiratory, and endocrine systems. In order for these systems to respond properly, your nerve system must be operating at peak efficiency. By detecting and correcting areas of spinal nerve interference, your chiropractor helps your nerve system — your body's master system — coordinate the activities of all your body's other systems. As a result, regular chiropractic care helps you get the most out of your exercise time and helps you obtain high levels of health and well being.

We're all familiar with the highway driving experience of being behind a person who is continually braking for no apparent reason. This is especially problematic if you're in the left-hand lane. You're zipping along at the posted speed limit and suddenly the brake lights of the car in front go on. You have to immediately react and hit your brakes. If this happens more than a couple of times, you look for the first opportunity to pass this unskilled driver. The person riding their brakes may thoughtlessly cause a serious traffic problem or worse. Metaphorically, you may be physiologically "riding the brakes" without knowing it, creating ongoing problems for your long-term wellness and well-being.

For example, many of us are not aware that lack of regular vigorous exercise results in a slowing down of our metabolism. Without such exercise, our daily metabolic processes simply do not operate at peak levels. In the absence of critical energy demands imposed by regular vigorous exercise, a low level steady state takes over. Fat cells accumulate, reflexes dull, and our overall sense of awareness deteriorates. But your body is a finely crafted machine and it is designed to fulfill very high performance metrics. The aphorism, "what you don't use, you lose" applies specifically to human physiological performance. Without regular vigorous exercise, you're riding your physiological brakes and your body systems will degrade accordingly.

The good news is that these entropic effects can be reversed. Our bodies are dynamic and remarkably adaptive. Beginning or renewing an exercise program will quickly result in noticeable benefits. Many people will begin observe such benefits within four to six weeks. The important health benefits derived from regular vigorous exercise include slowing of the heart rate, increased capacity of the heart to pump blood, increased capacity of the lungs to take in oxygen, accumulation of lean muscle mass, increased creative abilities, increased ability to focus and perform useful work, and improved restful sleep.

These benefits all derive from any basic exercise program that includes some form of strength training and some form of cardiovascular exercise. Thirty minutes per day, five days a week, is the recommended standard. A program that incorporates three days of cardiovascular exercise and two days of strength training, or three days of strength training and two days of cardiovascular exercise, will be sufficient to derive maximum results. Cardiovascular exercise includes walking, running, swimming, bicycling,

cross-country skiing, and sports such as basketball and lacrosse. Strength training should comprise routines including exercises for the chest, back, shoulders, arms, and legs. Certain forms of exercise such as yoga simultaneously incorporate strength training and cardiovascular exercise.

Most important is the consistency of exercise. What works for one person may not work for another. Find the types of exercise that you like to do and want to do and keep going. There will be times when you need to take a break for a week or two. Trust your instincts and return to your exercise program as appropriate. Encourage your family members to participate so that everyone can achieve peak performance, health, and wellness.