

Ishta Spinal Touch - Core Alignment

by Sue Weller oc and Allyn Edwards oc

With Ishta Spinal Touch - Core Alignment we are interested in the integrity and health of the spine and the general wellness of the person. What we are assessing with this method is the level of postural distortion as seen in the spine, pelvis and throughout the whole body. We will explain how we do this later on, but first would like to look at how postural changes and, therefore, the health of the spine, are related to the overall health of a person.

Why Do We Have Postural Changes?

In order to understand this we need to look at the Hans Selyle model of stress. When a person is subjected to a stressor, the body goes into the alarm stage of the stress response, also known as the flight or fight reaction. The first thing that happens is that the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS), located in the intermediolateral tract of the spinal chord, is initiated. The sympathetic nervous system directly affects visceral function via neuronal control of the organs. As a result, all catabolic activities are increased (e.g. heart rate and blood pressure), and all anabolic activities are decreased (e.g. digestion, growth, cellular immunity, sex glands). The SNS sends a message directly to the adrenal glands; unusually it doesn't need to synapse at the sympathetic chain ganglia, which means that the response is speeded up. This is a good evolutionary response when we are in danger.

What Are The Common Stressors That Bring About A Stress Response? They include:

Traumas

Macro traumas, which are the classic injuries to soft tissue as a result of:

- 1. Birth trauma;
- 2. Falls and accidents;
- 3. Sports injuries;
- Surgery.



The Stress-Tension-Pain Cycle

Micro traumas, which are the classic repetitive strain injuries as a result of:

- 1. Chronic bad posture;
- 2. Chronic sedentary lifestyle;
- 3. Overuse injuries.

Traumas lead to tissue damage and result in scar tissue deposition in muscles, tendons, ligaments, joint capsules and on bony surfaces. This leads to functional changes which result in decreased motion in the joints and surrounding tissue. Neurological changes also accompany these soft tissue injuries which often result in further decreases in motion.

Toxins

Toxins can be in the form of food additives, cortain foods, environmental toxins, pharmaceuticals, and in our personal care products.

Deficiencies

Nutrient deficiencies, lack of water, poor air quality or lack of sunlight.

Emotional upset

Chronic emotional stressors, bereavement, divorce, etc.

With the stress response, if the stressors are not present for too long, and there are not too many at any one time, the body recovers and returns to a state of homeostasis. We can say that the body is reacting within its elastic limits. However, when a stressor is prolonged, or

a number of stressors are present at the same time, the body goes beyond being able to return to a homeostatic balance after the stressor is removed. It goes beyond its elastic limits and enters the adaptive stage of the stress response known as strain.

Allostasia

In this stage of chronic strain, the body does a wonderful job of adapting, and adopts a new state of balance known as allostasis. What we are seeing in allostasis is chronic

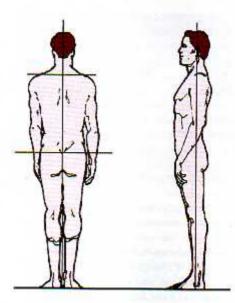
changes to the demands upon, and the subsequent function of, the cells. In other words, the body sets a new homeostatic set point for these variables that matches the perceived environmental demand.

The physiological changes we see during allostasis include:

- · Increased cortisol levels;
- · Increased heart rate;
- · Increased vasoconstriction;
- · Increased blood pressure;
- · Increased blood glucose levels:
- · Increased blood lipid levels;
- · Increased blood cholesterol levels;
- Increased feelings of anxiety, stress, fear and depression;
- · Decreased cellular immunity;
- Decreased anabolic hormones like growth hormone and testosterone;
- · Bone loss:
- · Muscle fibre changes.

The result of these chronic changes to our physiology leads to a decrease in the pH of the body (acidosis), and an incomplete breakdown of the products of oxidation. The latter then become deposited in the body tissues, including the muscles. With the increased deposition of these toxins over time, the muscle cells begin to change in texture and shape, which can lead to a distortion of the musculoskeletal structure and posture.

These changes may also lead on to the well-known diseases of the 20th and 21st centuries, the diseases of adaptation.



Ideal posture

Involvement of the Spine in the Stress Response

As far as the health of the spine is concerned, and its involvement in the stress response, on top of what we have already mentioned, we need to look in more depth at what happens when the spine is compromised, either due to poor posture, sitting, traumas or even the lack of certain nutrients.

Most of the research to support what follows comes from neurophysiologists and neuropsychologists. The latest research on the role of movement and proprioception in the homeostatic regulation of whole-body physiology via connections between mechanoreceptors, the cerebellum and the areas of the brain for the regulation of the organs, the stress response, cognition, emotion and movement, balance and coordination, is amazing.

The global affects of changes to the centro of gravity of the body and, therefore, the whole of the spine, result in decreased movement around the spinal joints. This in turn leads to increased nociceptive input, or negative body messages, and decreased proprioceptive input, or positive body messages.

Most of these messages are subconscious or asymptomatic. The negative body messages stimulate those parts of the brain associated with the stress relay centre; the locus and the amygdala, the latter being the stress and anxiety centre; and these in turn stimulate the adrenal glands. Decreased positive body messages lead to decreased stimulation of the bodymind's integration and homeostasis centre, the cerebellum; the learning centre, the hippocampus; the sensory centre of the organs, the solitary nerve; and the motor centre of the organs, the vagus nerve."

The result of all of this is the improper homeostatic control of movement, halance, coordination, stress hormone levels, cognition and learning, emotions, organ function, and the immune system.

Finally on this point, more than 50% of all neurons for proprioception in the spinal cord charge the brain battery, therefore, decreased proprioception leads to decreased energy for the brain.

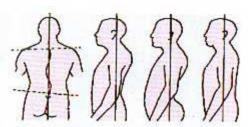
All this as a result of poor spinal health!

What Do We Do In Ishta Spinal Touch -Core Alignment?

Basically, we measure the postural changes of the spine and the postural muscles using a posturometre or plumbline.

According to Drs Hurley and Sanders, the founders of the forerunner to Spinal Touch, the body's centre of gravity (the L5/S1 junction) is the most accurate area of the body to assess for postural distortion.

In a body that is not distorted and, therefore, in a physiological efficient posture, the centre of gravity is in the correct relationship to its counterweight, the third sacral segment.

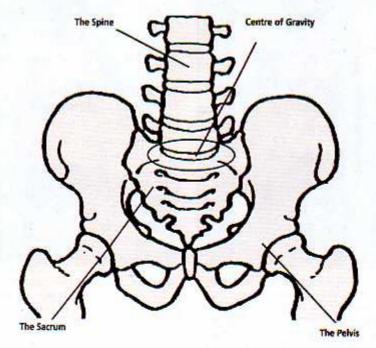


Degrees of Postural Distortion

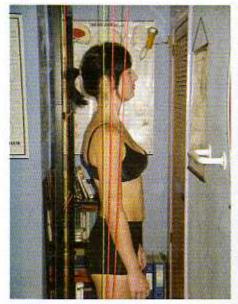
With the centre of gravity and the counterweight in balance, a person would appear upright when assessed at a plumbline which would bisect them in two equally left to right. They would be weight bearing evenly on both feet, their shoulders and hips would appear level, and from the side they would have anatomically correct spinal curves.

What we actually see at the plumbline can be a combination of: an anterior hip and the plumbline drifting to the right or to the left of the spine, uneven shoulders and hips with a scollosis, and from the side the person can be leaning forward, have anterior head carriage, and the spinal curves are either accentuated or lost.

The spinal health is struggling, and the nociceptors around the spinal joints are giving off lots of negative body messages and stimulating the stress response. The degree of distortion is a physical indicator of the level of stress in the system, and with time the posture



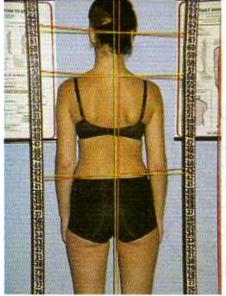
Centre of Gravity and Counterweight



In the lateral aspect we see that the ear and the greater trochanter are much further forward than they should be. This has lead to an increased lumbar lordosis to attempt to compensate.

becomes increasingly distorted with more and more negative body messages and less and less positive ones. This ultimately leads to pain, disease, exhaustion and death.

Before - Posterier



The green lines are where the person should be, the pink lines denote where they actually are. We can see that this person is leaning over to one side and that their hips shoulders and occiput are not level. Also there is a pronounced 'winging' of the right scapula

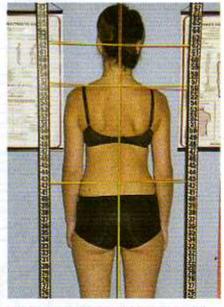


We can see in the lateral aspect that the orward lean has reduced and the anterior head carriage almost completely gone. This is important as for every inch of anterior head carriage, the posterior cervical muscles have to work 10 times harder.

The Alignment

Once we have assessed the level of postural distortion we are able to determine what is required to improve the posture. This involves a series of very

After - Posterier



We can see that after the alignment, this person is much more upright and the hips, shoulders and occiput are much more level than before

tight and precise 'rub-outs' over the postural muscles, while the centre of gravity is held in alignment with the counterweight. This results in the body beginning to realign itself, reduce the nociceptive stimulation and increase the proprioception. In other words, the hody decreases the stress response and allows the tissues to dump some of the toxic waste stored in them. The mind-body begins to return from allostasis towards homeostasis.

Obviously, homeostatic balance and postural correction will not occur overnight, but over a course of treatments, balance can be restored. The majority of changes to spinal health are symptom free, and once the presenting symptoms have decreased there will still be a long way to go to return to a homeostatic balance and normal posture. Picture the presenting symptoms as being like the tip of an iceberg.

This normalization of health also requires the correct nutrition and that the body be exercised to improve the range of movement of the joints of the spine and the rest of the body. We must not forget the effect that our thoughts also have on our health, including the health of the spine.

In Summary

Through a thorough realignment of the centre of gravity with Ishta Spinal Touch — Core Alignment, we can help the body reduce its scar tissue build-up around the joints, improve the mobility of the body and improve its posture. We can also greatly help the body decrease the stress response and improve the positive body messages generated via the spine, which will lead to normalization of the body and brain functions on all levels.

Safe for Everyone

Spinal touch is a very safe modality due to its gentleness and can, therefore, treat people with any condition and at any age. However, it is a powerful modality, and there can be some short-term reactions to the alignment in the form of tiredness (people usually have a good night's sleep after an alignment), some muscle soreness and stiffness due to the postural changes, a feeling of lightness as some of the stress is removed from the structure. Most people are surprised at the amount of change that occurs with such a light approach.



Inter-spinous rub-out

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Cranial pump rub-out

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About the Authors

Sue Weller DC and Allyn Edwards DC are tutors in Ishta Spinal Touch. After reading Dr Rosquist's Book The Encyclopædia of the Spinal Touch Treatment, Sue and Allyn, both McTimoney Chiropractors, travelled to America in 1998 to train with Dr Rosquist. As Chiropractors, they were not in the habit of assessing and treating the posture, and were amazed at the changes seen on the course. Dr Rosquist asked them if they would train to be tutors of Spinal Touch and teach his technique in Europe. On their return they introduced Spinal Touch into their busy practices, and over the last ten years have seen remarkable improvement in thousands of people. They may be contacted on Tel: 01785 616409; mail@spinaltouch.com; Skype: SpinalTouch www.spinaltouch.com

Further Information

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