

Inflammation & Pain: Good or Bad?

Okay, so let's take a look at inflammation. Many people think that inflammation is a bad thing. Well sometimes it is and sometimes not.

Acute Inflammation

Remember the [acute inflammatory process](#) is what helps heal the tissue. Hypothetically, if it were possible to remove all the inflammatory chemicals after an injury, the damaged tissue would NOT heal. The key is to control inflammation versus stopping it.

Ice vs. Heat

So if the injury is severe and there are obvious signs of inflammation; (pain, heat, redness, swelling and loss of function), then ice works well as it causes the blood vessels to [vasoconstrict](#) thus slowing down the flow of inflammatory chemicals into the injured soft tissue.

If the injury is mild and there are minimal or no signs of inflammation then heat works well. Think about what works best after a hard day's work. A nice hot tub is effective as your muscles are tight and even though there is some minor inflammation occurring it is best to keep the blood vessels open and encourage the fluids to flow on through! **NOTE:** Always consult with me first in terms of using ice or heat, if you are uncertain.

Chronic Inflammation

This is a bit different. [Chronic inflammation](#) may occur in soft tissue from old nagging injuries that never healed properly or from serious disease processes of visceral organs. This can be serious stuff!

Now For Pain!

Pain should be seen is neither good or bad, rather as an indicator that something is happening. The severity of pain does not always correlate with the severity of the injury. Here are some examples: Calf cramps, paper cuts, hitting your shin on the coffee table, these all hurt like crazy but are no big deal. Certainly you are not headed to the ER.

Try this. Pinch the skin on your forearm. Go ahead. That really hurts, but the lesson is a high degree of pain is not always a big problem.

And try this. Bend your finger back until it's painful. (I know crazy, silly stuff). A biopsy of the tissue won't reveal a tumor, infection or any lesion. But releasing the finger and letting it return to its "position of comfort" will allow the pain to subside. We need to think about low back and neck pain in a similar way -functionally. 97% of back pain seen by primary care physicians is mechanical in origin -there's something wrong with the muscles, ligaments or connective tissues. [Physician & Sports Medicine](#), 1997.

The Potential Bad News. On the flip side many deadly diseases, [cancer](#) and [diabetes](#), are life threatening but can cause virtually no pain in the early stages.

Chiropractic Edge! So many people are fearful of chiropractic because it may hurt or it looks like it hurts. The reality is that for most patients it is a painless event. More importantly it can give you great relief! It is possible that you may be sore for a few days after the initial adjustment or two, but that is just old trapped inflammatory chemicals releasing and new chemicals flowing in. This can last 1-3 days and is a NORMAL part of the healing process.