

CHIROPRACTIC ADJUSTMENTS KEEP MUSICIANS IN TUNE!

Whether you are strumming your guitar for friends and family around the campfire or are an accomplished professional musician, depending on your ability to play your instrument to earn your living, you probably have noticed that playing your instrument can place quite a bit of strain on your body. Recreational and professional musicians alike can easily incur injuries to the back, neck, shoulders, elbows, arms, wrists and fingers. Whether it is the back breaking hauling of heavy amplifiers and other equipment or repetitive stress due to long rehearsal hours, musicians face unique physical challenges. Countless horror stories abound about musicians who were excellent performers until they developed repetitive strain injuries to arm or hand for example. Then their career was either put on hold temporarily or was over entirely due to the debilitating injury leaving the musician frustrated and depressed.

Why are musicians prone to these injuries? What can be done about them?

Physical stress like bad posture while playing your instrument, ergonomically incorrect technique, prolonged playing without breaks, playing in one position for long periods of time, too much force when carrying heavy equipment can all contribute to physical stress causing repetitive strain injuries. The continued stress will eventually lead to symptoms, then disease and finally disability. Typically people who suffer from repetitive strain injuries believe that the pain will go away. Many musicians are out there attempting to play their instruments even though their arm, elbow, shoulder, neck or back are killing them. Remember that pain always is a warning signal, almost like the little oil light of your car. Do you think the red light will turn off by itself, or that it is not important enough to pay attention to?

It is advisable to see a chiropractor to evaluate and treat your condition. A chiropractor does not only reduce the pain, but also helps you eliminate the physical stressors and will address and suggest ways to avoid chemical stressors (alcohol, smoking, drugs) and emotional stress. The chiropractor will offer advice on how to improve overall health and fitness to prevent painful musculoskeletal injuries. The Chiropractic Performing Arts Network is a group of chiropractors who are dedicated to bringing natural, drugless healthcare to the performing arts population with the vision of enhancing performance, increasing vitality and creativity, eliminating drug use (both prescription and recreational), and to increase overall body awareness. The Namibian Chiropractic Association aligns itself with these objectives.

The following tips can help you to avoid repetitive strain injuries:

1. Stretch your muscles before you start playing and perform some light exercises to warm and loosen up the body.
2. Do stretching exercises regularly throughout the day to counteract positional strain.
3. Take frequent breaks to rest and self-massage aching muscles.
4. Watch your posture!
5. Avoid cold environments, as this worsens repetitive strain injuries, due to reduced blood flow to muscles leading to tense and tight muscles.
6. Avoid other hobbies like sewing, knitting, or certain sport, especially racquet sports.

7. Don't do weight lifting or upper body strenuous gym exercises when in the acute inflamed stage, as this causes further irritation and swelling.
8. Apply ice to the area of acute inflammation.
9. Visit a chiropractor to assist you with your treatment plan.

Scores of famous musicians and many professional music makers agree that chiropractic care has helped them overcome their often excruciating and debilitating conditions.

One of them is our chiropractic champion of the month, professional flutist Hans-Peter Drobisch. With the Swakopmund "Musikwoche" coming up in December, Hans-Peter will make sure he gets another chiropractic treatment before the week-long rehearsals and recitals start. Hans-Peter says: "I need regular chiropractic treatment to balance my body. As a professional musician it is essential that I feel physically fit and comfortable and chiropractic together with ergonomic exercises help me to maintain relaxed muscles and an aligned spine. It definitely assists my concentration, endurance and performance quality. As a flutist I find that especially my neck and shoulder muscles are put under tension due to the postural strain. Although I do breathing and stretching exercises every morning to loosen up I feel that chiropractic care is necessary to complete my health regimen."

From an early age Hans-Peter has been passionate about music with the flute becoming his favorite instrument. He has played as principal flutist in various orchestras in Germany and completed his music studies with a soloist degree as well as a teachers' licentiate. After emigrating to Namibia he started working as a teacher at the College of the Arts while performing in numerous concerts as soloist. He regularly organizes chamber music concerts, has served on the National Symphony Orchestra for eighteen years and has often appeared as conductor of the flute ensemble and woodwinds at the Swakopmund "Musikwoche". In addition he has recorded three CD's together with German guitarist Roger Zimmermann.

