

## **Thoracic-outlet syndromes respond to chiropractic**

**Question:** I have been diagnosed with thoracic-outlet syndrome. I get pain in my right arm that goes into my hands and fingers. My arms go numb at night, especially if I put them under my head to sleep. Is there anything a Chiropractor can do to help my condition?

**Answer:** Thoracic-outlet syndrome is a compression of the subclavian artery and or the brachial plexus nerves as they pass over your first rib and then under your clavicle and its overlying musculature. The entrapment of the blood vessels and the nerves in the lowest portion of your neck, where it meets your shoulders, is a very common irritation and a very serious condition.

The condition is affected by various factors. Vigorous work or muscular exercise may result in an increase of muscular bulk, thereby reducing the space through which the artery vein and nerves must pass. Congenital factors such as a cervical rib, or a bony protuberance on the first rib may cause pressure on the vessels or nerves when the arm is in certain positions. Traumatic causes of these syndromes are fractures of the clavicle and dislocations of the shoulder. A blood vessel exiting this thoracic area that is narrowed or sclerotic due to disease or aging can give these symptoms also.

In general, the symptoms consist of pain in the fingers, hand, forearm, arm, and shoulder along with abnormal sensations, felt along the back of the arm

and hand. Numbness is also common in the fingers and in more severe cases coldness, weakness and discoloration.

Carpal-tunnel syndrome, which is entrapment of the median nerve and blood vessels, may be associated with thoracic-outlet syndromes but should be differentially diagnosed to avoid unnecessary surgery.

Thoracic-outlet syndrome responds well to chiropractic treatment. Precise adjustments to the cervical and thoracic spine along with adjacent joints realigns structures to allow proper nerve and blood supply. Reduction of spasm and muscle inflammation also reduces irritation. In severe cases surgery may be necessary.

**Quote of the week:** *“Say what you mean, mean what you say, and do not be mean when you say it.”* - Meryl Runion