

Injured Ask: How Long Will It Take, Doctor?

Many of us injure ourselves partly because we tend to rush headlong into activities—sports, recreational happenings, yard work and the like—without properly conditioning our bodies for the sudden added physical load, and partly because a lot more of us are a lot more physically active these days.

That's why nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones, tendons and joints get hurt from time to time.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE, DOCTOR?

Then, human nature being what it is, we expect to be fully healed instantly. After all, we reason, if we don't get well fast we'll miss out on all the fun. So, "How long will it take, Doctor?" is one of the first questions a chiropractic doctor hears from an injured patient.

HEALING TIME SOMETIMES SHORT

And that's a tough question to answer precisely. Damaged tissues don't heal overnight. Nature takes its own time for healing. Some minor ligament sprains heal in just a few days, but severe or chronic injuries may take several weeks or months to become fully well again. Nerves, especially, take their own sweet time in healing, and muscles, fascias, and other soft tissues have a time schedule, too.

TIME ESTIMATE NOT A GUARANTEE

The doctor may estimate the number of treatments and healing time, but that's just an

estimate, not a guarantee. Some persons heal slower than others no matter what, and relapses and reinjury can happen to anyone.

Even minor acute injuries should be taken seriously, and treatment recommendations followed to the letter.

GET TO DOCTOR FAST

Also, delay in getting to the chiropractor for diagnosis and treatment of an injury may add even more to the healing time. That's why most injuries should get chiropractic care right away. Quick action in

getting to the doctor may get the injured one back in the game of life much faster.

A WORD ABOUT PATIENCE

Surprisingly, it's not the doctor, it's the patient who plays the starring role in the recovery process from injury. And the patient's success in that role will depend in large measure on his or her understanding of the treatment goals as well as the patient's full cooperation in following the doctor's treatment and rehabilitation prescription.

What's needed here is the patient's patience in the true sense of the word. A successful recovery from injury will depend a lot on the patient having the patience to stick with the prescribed treatment and rehabilitation plan, a plan that will prevent an acute case from becoming chronic — or if the case is already chronic — a plan which will bring the condition to the point of optimum improvement.

The patient's role revolves around the following key points:

- Minor injuries can become major health problems if not properly cared for. That's why a chiropractic checkup is so important in all musculoskeletal injury cases no matter how minor they may seem to be.
- All injuries start as acute, but can become chronic if aggravated or reinjured, or if treatment is inadequate or incomplete. For this reason, even minor acute injuries should be taken seriously, and treatment recommendations followed to the letter. Shortcutting to save time, effort, or money in either the acute or chronic phases is foolhardy and nearly always counterproductive.

A WORD OF CAUTION

As treatment progresses and the pain begins to ease, the injured one may think everything is okay and discontinue treatment before full recovery. But quitting too soon—before complete recovery—may leave a residual weakness subject to reinjury. The world is full of people with "trick knees" or "bum backs" who quit treatment before optimum results were obtained.

FOLLOW CHIROPRACTOR'S ADVICE

When you are injured, in fairness to yourself, follow your chiropractic doctor's recommendations and realize that your own body ultimately answers the question: "How long will it take, Doctor?"