



The Backbone Of Health

There are a variety of holistic treatment therapies that work synergistically to return spinal health. You've got chiropractic, acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM), lasers and homeopathy that complement each other and return spinal health from injury and inflammation to fun and games again. Knowing these options puts you well ahead in the game of spinal health.

Some dog breeds are more prone to back problems because of their physique. Agility and working dogs, likely due to their enthusiasm and drive, also suffer back injuries. Some breeds, particularly the Doberman Pinscher, play bumper car dogs, leaping into the air and slamming into each other. As a result, their vertebrae get impacted and back problems result.

In veterinary medicine we refer to a chiropractic adjustment as a spinal alignments, for we are not, per se, chiropractors. A

Understanding the choice of holistic therapies at your disposal puts dog owners ahead in the game of spinal health.



Since beginning her holistically oriented veterinary practice over 30 years ago, Deva Khalsa VMD has been incorporating homeopathy, acupuncture, Chinese herbs, nutritional advice, and allergy elimination techniques such as Allergy Elimination and JMT into her approach. Today her work is a blend of sophisticated holistic techniques and traditional veterinary medicine designed to best enhance the natural strengths and attributes of her patient. She is available for worldwide consults by contacting her online at doctordeva.com

well-performed spinal alignment is extremely important for full reversal and healing of misaligned vertebrae. I'm against the use of NSAIDs and other anti-inflammatory and pain products when holistic modalities are so very effective. Until the vertebrae are back into correct alignment, you haven't corrected the problem.

WHEN A BACK GETS OUT OF WHACK

A dog's backbone can be compared to a horizontal suspension bridge held up at each end by his hips and shoulders. The vertebral column holds and protects the spinal cord. Nerves branch out from the spinal cord exiting between the vertebrae and communicating to all parts of the body. The spinal cord is a relay center that sends and receives information from the brain.

When vertebrae get stuck (subluxated) and don't move correctly they can irritate these delicate nerve branches. This can interfere

with the vital life force that travels through your dog's nervous system, keeping his brain in touch with his body. When vertebrae in a dog's spinal column aren't in the correct position and nerves become inflamed, the muscles will react. Typically they become too tight and sometimes too weak. Discs, ligaments and other surrounding connective tissues may also become inflamed. A sequence of events comes into play when a dog begins to feel discomfort in his back.

First, his vertebrae are no longer aligned, presenting a mechanical problem. Second, in an attempt to stabilize and protect the area, his muscles might tighten or go into a painful spasm. Third, the nerves exiting his vertebral column might be compressed and inflamed. Minor back problems left untreated can escalate into debilitating and dangerous disc problems. Many people incorrectly use the term "slipped disc." A disc can thin, bulge,

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rupture or protrude but it doesn't slip! Each spinal disc has a jelly-like ball-bearing core that is contained by bands of fibrous tissue. Healthy discs give your dog flexibility allowing normal turning and bending. Disc protrusion causes extreme pain. With protrusion and rupture, a dog may become paralyzed. A lack of sensation in his hind legs and loss of bowel and bladder control may follow.

Routine adjustments for dogs prone to back problems are essential. Let's just imagine a line of dominos on a table. Now imagine pushing on them from each side. Some of the dominos have to shift and move to adjust to the pressure. Your dog's backbone resembles this line of dominos with the sacrum and occiput at either end. If these end units are out of alignment they put pressure on the middle vertebrae. The most common presentation in a Dachshund with a back problem is at the thoraco-lumbar junction. Yet, if I adjust and release the sacrum, the pressure at the painful site reduces and normalizes and often adjusts on its own.

DANGER SIGNALS

Low-grade back pain in humans acts as a danger signal alerting us to a possible displacement or pinched nerve. Tight painful muscles signal something's wrong, so we can get medical help before things go too far. A dog's back may hurt but he has no way to tell us. I've seen many agility and working dogs perform poorly, solely due to back pain.

You can test the health and integrity of your dog's spine by softly kneading the muscles on either side of the backbone along the entire length of the back. You may find that some of the muscle groups are soft and pliable while one particular area has very tight or even rock-like muscles. A tight area might be out of alignment. If your dog winces or looks back at you with a warning look, you may be kneading an area that needs to be corrected with a spinal manipulation.

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

It's a good idea for agility and working dogs, as well as breeds prone to back problems, to have adjustments several times a year. Even if you don't take your dog for regular treatments, tight hard muscles may signal the need for a quick visit to a chiropractor or veterinary acupuncturist.

A simple spinal manipulation or acupuncture treatment often nips back problems in the bud. I prefer both an adjustment and acupuncture together, but acupuncture alone can often relax the spasms and help the spine to settle down and align itself. If these therapies are not available in your area, you may want to try Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM) or homeopathic remedies. I've found the Chinese herb Liquidambar 15 from

Seven Forests to be very helpful. A typical dose would be: Dachshund - one pill three times a day; Basset Hound - two pills three times a day; Doberman - three pills three times a day.

Helpful remedies for back problems are *Hypericum* 30X given three to six times a day. Use *Bryonia* 30X three times a day if the dog prefers to lie still and limit his movement. *Rhus tox* 30X four times a day if the dog is stiffer on arising and then loosens up after moving around a bit.

Learning how to recognize and treat problems early can prevent more serious back problems later. Painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs mask the pain but they don't address the mechanical problem, which sets the stage for more damage over time. Combining holistic therapies is the most effective way to treat back problems, with spinal adjustment also an important factor.

MAX'S STORY

Max, like many Dachshunds, had back trouble due to his very long back and very short legs – and he liked to jump. While he was playing with his brother, Max got bumped and let out a yelp. Ouch! His disc bulged out putting pressure on the large nerve that forms the spinal cord. This type of injury is common in long-backed breeds like Dachshunds and Basset Hounds. It's just the way they're put together.

His conventional veterinarian gave him steroids (prednisolone) to relieve the pain and swelling, and prescribed strict cage rest for a month. But Max didn't get better. He'd seem to improve but the problem would return. His back legs became paralyzed and he could no longer urinate on his own. His veterinarian discussed expensive back surgery but said it was probably too late.

The pressure from the bulging disc had destroyed some of the nerve tissue in Max's spine (which was why he couldn't walk) but he still had a little feeling in the tips of his back toes. The steroids suppressed the inflammation in the spine, which did help keep

Learning how to recognize and treat the problem early often prevents more serious back problems later.

the nerve tissue from becoming even more damaged. Unfortunately, even though the steroids suppressed the symptoms, the real cause of the problem wasn't addressed.

MAX'S HOLISTIC TREATMENT

I began Max's treatment by relieving pain and inflammation with a special laser directly on the affected area. Next, I carefully injected homeopathic remedies into acupuncture points near the injury to decrease Max's muscle spasms. The muscles on either side of his back had gone into spasm in an attempt to protect his spine, worsening his pain. With these muscles more relaxed, I could do a chiropractic adjustment to gently move his vertebrae back into their correct position.

Max already looked brighter and more relieved. I then carefully placed acupuncture needles along the sides of his spine, with four more tiny needles in some special points on his legs. This evidently relieved blockages and reinstated the harmonious flow of energy along Max's spine.

Max went home with Chinese herbs and homeopathic remedies. Seven Forests Liquidambar 15 is excellent for back problems and disc pain, working to invigorate the meridians. I also prescribed him several homeopathic remedies: *Apis* 6X three times a day to reduce swelling of the spinal tissue along with *Belladonna* 6X. Max was also given *Hypericum* 30X four times a day to help reduce nerve damage.

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These remedies worked to keep swelling to a minimum, alleviate pain and promote rapid healing. He returned regularly for follow-up chiropractic adjustments and acupuncture treatments. With each treatment, the mobility and strength in his hind legs improved. Control of his bladder returned and Max can urinate on his own. As Max improved, I changed his remedies to help rebuild the nerves that led to his bladder and hind legs. Finally, Max received nutritional supplements to strengthen his spine.

Max is now running and playing again. His brother is still bumping him and Max still likes to jump. But now his owner practices preventive holistic health care. Every few months she brings Max to my clinic for a checkup. I give him acupuncture and a chiropractic adjustment, which Max loves. As far as he's concerned, it's his day out at the spa! 🌿

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