



In addition to adjustments, chiropractors often can teach patients a variety of stretches that are designed to help patients regain flexibility in this area. "I retrain the muscles to work properly by giving patients specific exercises that can strengthen the area. I

addition, many chiropractors recommend shoulder pinches to help patients rebuild damage to the thoracic spine. "Shoulder pinches can be completed by sitting upright, and then trying to pinch your shoulder blades together as if you were trying to hold a pen between your shoulder blades," says Reinhardt.

When it comes to exercises to treat this area of the spine, chiropractors warn that they should be completed in moderation and under a chiropractor's supervision. "Before implementing any exercise program, I restore proper motion to the vertebra. If you don't have the vertebra moving properly and fluently, you can actually train muscles to do the wrong

thing," says Caraway.

Many chiropractors also use electric stimulation and massage to help ease pain in the thoracic spine. "I do a lot of electric stimulation in the area of the thoracic spine to try to rebuild the

"In addition, I use deep muscle massage in that area to loosen it up as best as possible."

PREVENTING INJURY

One way to prevent thoracic spine injuries from occurring is to have an "ergonomically correct" workstation. "A person who works at a computer should always sit at a chair with arms on it, so you can rest your arms while typing. You also need a back on your chair, and you need to use it instead of leaning forward," warns Reinhardt. Since heavy lifting can also cause injury to the thoracic spine, chiropractors recommend that parents take special precautions when handling their children. "You also need to be careful holding your children. You need to make sure you're well supported, especially when placing a child into a car seat, which is an easy way to injure this area," says Reinhardt.

A healthy back can be achieved through on-going chiropractic care.



"Thoracic spine injuries are about as common as neck or lower back injuries, but they often are overlooked, or not taken care of by individuals because they might not have dramatic symptoms, like those that occur in the neck or lower back."

Dr. Steven Caraway, Beutler-England Chiropractic Clinic, Lake Charles, LA.

often recommend an extension exercise where the patient lies on their stomach and lifts their body off the floor in a backwards position," says Caraway. In

muscles to make them stronger," says Adams, noting that treatment regimens for this area of the spine usually range between four and 12 weeks.