

I had a patient this morning who was suffering from neck pain. She had fallen a few days back and hurt her leg. She told me that she thought the neck pain was related to the fall and of course it probably was. Any kind of fall will jerk the neck. Not everyone will have symptoms in the neck from a fall, but some do of course.

Whether or not you have symptoms after some type of trauma depends on a lot of factors. Certainly the severity of the accident itself is the primary factor. The condition of the individual is also a significant factor. Younger people tend to have fewer consequences after an injury than older folks. We all know this, but not everyone knows why that is true.

Age itself is only part of the reason. As we age, our tissues become less elastic, so that accidents can cause ligaments, tendons and muscles to tear when the same force sustained by a younger individual might just stretch these tissues. Bones are also usually harder and therefore less likely to break when we are younger.

Another reason older individuals are more susceptible to injury after a trauma is the condition of the body prior to the trauma. Most of the time in a fall or other type of accident, the joints suffer the most damage, followed by the muscles. When the ligaments and cartilage that make up the joints heal, they often heal with some residual scar tissue. The same thing occurs when muscle tissue heals. This is known as fibrosis.

Scar, or fibrotic tissue, is not as elastic as normal tissue, so over time, and after repeated injuries our joints and muscles become more stiff and less forgiving when future accidents happen. As a result, even a minor fall or other injury can cause pain.

The best method for minimizing this stiffening of the joints is through regular physical activity. Deep tissue massage can also help improve the elasticity of the muscles and chiropractic adjustments can help improve the elasticity of the joints. By employing these methods regularly, we can minimize the stiffening of the body that occurs with age and reduce the aches and pains many older individuals suffer