

Over the last two weeks I have been discussing how injuries occur and how they heal. Ideally when damaged tissue heals, it is rebuilt with new normal tissue. Damaged muscle tissue is replaced with new muscle tissue. Damaged ligament tissue is replaced with new ligament tissue. Unfortunately, it doesn't exactly work that way.

Anytime these tissues are damaged, a certain amount of fibrotic tissue is formed. Fibrotic tissue is also known as scar tissue. The body can make scar tissue very quickly, but normal tissue takes much longer. The body uses scar tissue like a bandaid, to protect the area, giving the body time to build the normal tissue. Unfortunately, the scar tissue doesn't completely go away.

Scar tissue does not function like normal tissue. It doesn't move and stretch like normal tissue. This can cause the joints that the tissue connects to function abnormally. In time, this abnormal function can lead to even more scar tissue as well as chronic pain and inflammation.

The more scar tissue that has formed, the less likely the injury will heal on its own. Treatment must include active therapies that can break down the scar tissue. These include chiropractic adjustments, exercise and several other soft tissue therapies that target scar fiber buildup. Simply treating the pain with analgesics like Tylenol or anti-inflammatory drugs like Ibuprofen or cortisone will not encourage healing.

The older the injury, the longer it will take to heal and the greater the possibility that some damage will be permanent. It is often difficult to know how long a problem has been developing. How long it has hurt is a poor indicator. Much of the accumulated damage builds up painlessly. When symptoms begin to appear, they often do so in episodes. You may feel pain for a few days and then it goes away. It can be months or even a few years before you have another episode. In time the episodes become more frequent and last longer.

The longer you live with a problem the more scar tissue develops and the more difficult it becomes to treat and heal. It is always wise to address problems in their early stages, rather than wait until a condition has gotten to the point where it interferes with your normal activities.