

Just for a second, imagine a garden hose running a full flow of water to your vegetable garden. We'd all agree that under 'normal' conditions your vegetables would grow 'normally', bear 'normal' fruit and would most likely be 'normally' resistant to disease.

Now imagine that you've stepped on that hose and the flow of water has now been cut to just a trickle. Of course, your vegetables won't actually die but they certainly won't look so great, they won't bear fruit anywhere near the size and quality they did before and you can bet that if there's disease anywhere in your garden, your vegetables will get it.

So now let's put that into a human frame perspective.

The garden hose, in this case your spinal cord, is encased within your spinal column or vertebrae and runs from your brain down to your sacral base located at the top of your backside. Its main function is to deliver 'life messages' or nerve flow 24 hours a day 365 days a year to each and every cell in your body. It does this by firing these 'messages' from your brain to the rest of the body, via the nerves exiting from your spine to every organ, muscle, tissue and cell that you possess. And it does this at every level of disc spacing along the vertebral column.

### Vertebral Subluxation

Just like stepping on your garden hose, imagine that one or several of these vertebrae are misaligned and as a result put the same sort of pres-

But let's go back yet another cog.

Let's suppose you have a postural instability where one of your hips or the 'wing' of the pelvis, was sitting differently to the other. Firstly, the question is, would you know? Most probably not. This type of rotation usually occurs over a period of time and your brain, skeletal and muscular structures both cater to it and compensate for it brilliantly. Furthermore, we also know that this type of structural problem is, for a great part of its existence, 'asymptomatic' or without pain. So how would you know if you had a structural instability or 'vertebral subluxation'? Well, once again you most probably wouldn't. And chances are that you would more than likely join the ranks of so many of your fellow riders in either continuing to subconsciously compensate for it by way of posture, which is a type of 'guarding', or continue to change your set-up on the bike for ever and a day.

### Fooled by Compensation

Either way, very often, you will continue to be fooled by musculoskeletal compensation and 'nerve referral'. That is, you may have a postural instability in the pelvis with absolutely no pain locally, yet you may complain of severe pain somewhere else and never relate the two. For instance, you may experience a reemergence of your old injury, perhaps premature fatigue, maybe some new knee pain, suddenly your neck hurts or you now find yourself just putting up with constant low-grade residual pain, muscle stiffness, or joint pain.

Maybe you now feel pretty ordinary the day after a decent ride and perhaps your recovery is becoming noticeably slower and a bit second hand. Even more to the point, you may have absolutely no pain or soreness and yet just be miserably under-performing for what may appear to be no apparent reason. Vertebral misalignment is notorious for this type of power loss.

So remember, the pins and needles in your feet just may not be your shoes and whatever you do, don't throw your old saddle away just yet.

Now that's not to say that these things cannot be caused by other means. Of course, cycling is a demanding sport and those who take it seriously treat it that way and of course it would be reasonable to expect some by-products of what we do, especially when we involve the body in such a repetitious motion.

Very often though, just by taking some simple steps you can minimise residual pain, prevent injury, and maximise your performance well beyond your imagination.

Your ability to recover can also be enhanced. Lance Armstrong is right on the mark when he says, "Whoever recovers the fastest does the best".

Firstly, you must always consider taking the time for a proper set-up on your bike by a professional and is no doubt recommended as an essential start for everyone, not just the serious cyclist. Proper positioning will ensure that you will use your more dominant muscular system to your advantage. Equally, it's also a smart idea to get yourself checked. A chiropractic sports performance assessment aimed specifically at the bio-mechanics of cycling can not only tap into your hidden potential by way of optimising your nerve system, but it will kick start your natural recovery mechanism as well.

Next time you're on your bike and you feel like one crank arm is an inch shorter than the other, think again.

Remember 'it's not about the bike'; it's about that magnificent machine that drives it, whoever you are. 

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Pearson is adjusted to correct vertebral alignment by Billy Chow.



Author David Stapleton treats Savings and Loans rider Simon Pearson, who has experienced the benefits of correct spinal alignment and vertebral alignment.

sure on the nerves that are supposed to be delivering the nerve flow or 'messages of life' essential for normal function. Similar to the water flow reduced to your garden, your system will suffer the same sort of starvation as well. And it does. We know that what is called 'vertebral subluxation', can significantly reduce neurological flow right throughout your body, not only compromising organ function but in this case, significantly reducing physiological function and in turn, muscular power and performance.

Now imagine that you require even more of an effort from your body than just everyday living, as you get out of the saddle to climb that 12% hill or give that gut-wrenching almighty blast in an effort to shake the bunch as you sprint for home. Or perhaps you're just a weekender struggling to keep your foot from the ground on the hill to which you usually concede. It doesn't matter...it's all relative. The fact is that your nervous system is responsible for it all and without it you go nowhere.

Regular Bicycling Australia contributor Steve Hogg says that "Our central nervous system has evolved to give priority to postural muscle groups over phasic muscle groups. If the hip flexors are tight past a certain point then the body's neurological self-protection mechanism is to partially or wholly shut down the nerve pathways to the opposing muscle group".

This is exactly what occurs with biomechanical instability and together with good old gravity, the human frame will always go to the line of least resistance. It's all part of your posture. And posture 'is the window to your spine'.