

The Weight of the World: Is Atlas Misalignment Affecting Your Health? With Dr. Martin Hart, DC, of Keystone Total Health

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Synopsis: Key Take-Aways from Today's Presentation

When our atlas vertebra is not balanced—i.e., misaligned—it can struggle beneath the weight, causing a chain reaction of problems throughout the skeletal structure and nervous system, creating issues such as:

- headaches or migraines
- sound distortions, deafness, tinnitus, or noise in the inner ear
- pain in the jaw and neck
- extreme muscle stiffness and decreased shoulder mobility
- blood pressure issues
- brain fog and physical fatigue
- and more

And since our atlas bone is also responsible for such vital functions as protecting the brainstem and serving as the passageway for 100% of the brain's signals to the body, it's important that we address misalignment and learn how to keep our top-most vertebra stabilized and protected.

The key is to start with getting your atlas aligned. Then figure out what you need to do to *keep* it aligned.

Let's dive in to our topic:

What is the Atlas?

First, the atlas is the top-most vertebra in your spine and is held in place by connective tissue and muscles (as opposed to the other vertebra held in place by adjacent bones). This means that the atlas can not only slip out of place and cause issues, but without intervention, it will tend to stay out of place, prolonging existing problems. Second, the atlas is also a musculoskeletal regulator, meaning that it tells the brain what the rest of the body is doing. The atlas has suboccipital muscles (made up mostly of nerve fibers) that attach the atlas to your skull. When the atlas is pushed out of balance, the messages being sent back up are essentially filled with static. Third, the atlas acts as a fulcrum for the temporomandibular joint (TMJ).

When it is misaligned, it can change all of the mechanics within the skull and jaw related to opening and closing the mouth.

When the atlas is out of balance, the brain actually dips down into your neck and restricts blood flow by putting pressure on the brain stem. The brain stem regulates breath rate, stress levels, movement, digestion, blood pressure, blood sugar, etc. Essentially, all of the unconscious things the body does to self-regulate are suddenly affected just by one little bone in the neck shifting even just a few millimeters. Research has shown that atlas misalignment can cause low-back pain, knee pain, hip pain, foot pain, because it can throw off the entire gait, shifting everything else downstream of it.

Atlas misalignment is a major roadblock on the brain's information superhighway. It can slow blood flow to the brain, reduce cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) moving in and out of the brain, and can dysregulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which is the main channel of hormone regulation.

Let's move into what atlas misalignment can cause as well as some of the symptoms that can appear in the body:

Atlas Misalignment Conditions

- Craniocervical Syndrome
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Migraines
- Anxiety/Depression
- Fibromyalgia
- Trigeminal Neuralgia
- Hypertension
- Vertigo
- Pain syndromes
- Whiplash
- Tinnitus
- TMJ Syndrome

Atlas Misalignment Symptoms

- Vertigo

- Chronic Headache
- Tinnitus
- Facial Pain
- Ear Pain
- Dysphagia
- Neck Pain
- Syncope
- Sinus Congestion
- Neck Crepitus Sound
- Loss of Vision
- Involuntary eye-movement
- Severe Fatigue
- Chest Pain
- Brain Fog
- Head Pressure

Now, let's look at how do you fix atlas misalignment. How do you find a solution?

Atlas Misalignment Solutions:

Upper cervical specific adjustments

- Atlas Orthogonal Method
- Advanced Orthogonal Method
- Blair Technique
- NUCCA (National Upper Cervical Chiropractic Association)
- Activator Method

Finally, to reiterate, the key is to start with getting your atlas aligned. Then figure out what you need to do to *keep* it aligned.

- Conduct rehab exercises that address hypermobility
- Engage in craniosacral massage
- Practice rehab/muscle activation
- Practice nutrient therapy for building healthier and stronger connective tissues
 - Supplements such as collagen, vitamin C, fish oil, boron, manganese, and copper

- Investigate regenerative medicine (laser, PRP, and stem cells)

Each one of the above suggestions help you to address the root cause of the misalignment. In conclusion, remember that the adjustment of the atlas is only the first step towards maintaining atlas balance. The rest is a combination of being more aware of our symptoms and building strong connective tissue that keeps the atlas in place.

Resources:

<http://www.keystonetotalhealth.com/>

<https://alexandertechnique.com/at/>

<https://nucca.org/>

<https://www.blairtechnique.com/>

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