



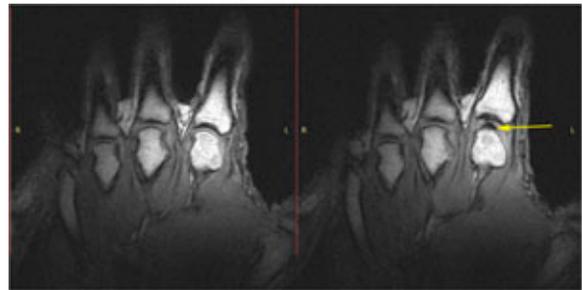
May 7, 2015 – Grand Rapids, MI

Question Time: Cracking Knuckles

Got an interesting question last weekend from a parent regarding her 13-year-old son: it seems every joint in his body snaps, crackles, and pops when he moves. That ties in with a question I'm asked all the time. Does "cracking" your knuckles harm the joints?

Let's talk about the teenager first. My question to Mom was, "Does he say it hurts?" She said no. I said don't worry about; he might make less noise if he worked on flexibility, but it shouldn't be a problem. There's always a possibility that one of the small ligaments that are supposed to hold a tendon in place could have torn and could result in snapping when the tendon goes over a bone, but it would be joint specific, not the entire body. Kids grow at an amazing rate and sometimes some parts of the body take time to catch up.

What's actually going on when we crack our knuckles? And does cracking our knuckles do any harm? Researchers recently asked that very question and used some very advanced technology to check it: cine MRI, which creates a short movie instead of still MRI photos (1). What happens is that a cavity is very quickly made during the pulling action on the joint that creates the sound as the bones separate—something like the sound when you pull a suction cup off a window. It takes time for the fluid to return to the joint, and that's why you can't crack your knuckles again for a while. There's no reason to think it's harmful because nothing is really being damaged. Crack away; the worst you'll do is annoy those around you.



Saturday we'll turn to a more serious question I was asked.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: PLoS ONE 10(4): e0119470. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0119470.

WGVU FM 88.5/95.3 **npr** **Straight Talk on Health**

Hear Dr. Chet's take on the latest health news and research—listen to *Straight Talk on Health* Sunday at 7:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the Eastern Time Zone on WGVU-FM 88.5 or 95.3, or listen live via the Internet by going to www.wgvu.org/wgvunews and clicking on "Listen Live" at the top.

The health information in this message is designed for educational purposes only. It's not a substitute for medical advice from your healthcare provider, and you should not use it to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. It's designed to motivate you to work toward better health, and that includes seeing your healthcare professional regularly. If what you've read raises any questions or concerns about health problems or possible diseases, talk to your healthcare provider today.

Subscribe to the Message from Dr. Chet at DrChet.com — © Chet Zelasko PhD LLC