

## Testimonial for Dr. Christine Miller

Last fall I over-strained both my knees while standing braced on top of rickety scaffolding using a pole chainsaw – both knees became very sore and delicate, then healed up a bit. Subsequent construction work carrying equipment across uneven ground left me with a swollen right knee that would not heal, even after weeks of R-I-C-E (rest, ice, compression, elevation). And a left one that wasn't swollen, but again very 'delicate' feeling.

I'd had a similar problem with my left knee 8 years ago – overuse during construction that led to weeks of a swollen knee that wouldn't go down. That time, my family physician had referred me to an orthopedic surgeon who performed arthroscopic surgery on my left knee. As the surgeon said after surgery, *"we used to make a big incision and remove a small amount – now we make a small hole, but we can remove a lot. In your case, I trimmed a lot of damaged cartilage in your knee."* The swelling went down and my knee healed, but it took months of rehab exercises to regain relatively full use – and with the reduced cartilage, no more running or hopping, and less flexibility.

This time, I was eager to avoid both the risks of surgery and the prospect of having cartilage removed. Talking with friends and neighbors, I learned that several had worked with local chiropractor Dr. Christine Miller with good results for issues ranging from back & joint injuries (including a broken spine!) to a deep cut across the hand. Dr. Miller was using cold laser therapy to promote the body's own healing mechanisms.

Researching on the internet, I learned that sports teams use laser therapy regularly to help athletes heal from injury, so I decided to give it a try.

I saw Dr. Miller for 12 weeks – initially twice a week, and then once a week for the final few – 18 visits total. Along with using laser therapy to stimulate healing in my knees, Dr. Miller worked with me to reduce the persistent swelling I was experiencing in my right knee and lower leg. She suggested a variety of approaches to encourage movement of the fluids, including castor oil heat wraps and a few specialized massage tools like a rubber ball with evenly spaced bumps to roll over sluggish tissue & a roller stick (similar to a slim, segmented rolling pin) that works great for me. Once the swelling was reduced, I could feel the healing begin.

Dr. Miller also provides a lot of education during the laser sessions. For me, she made me aware of how my heel-toe stride was damaging my knees. Even though I go barefoot at home, and regularly practice yoga & pilates, I also wear work boots for construction & rural chores like firewood gathering. I've learned that when wearing boots (or even heavy soled shoes), my stride changed to a heel strike that I now realize sends impact through my knees each time. Dr. Miller loaned me a few books about the much lower impact of how our feet land when barefoot walking & running – she also worked with me on how I place my foot and toes with each step, so that now I'm much more aware of using a barefoot style of walking even when wearing shoes. As a result, my knees can avoid all that damaging impact with each step.

One of the things I particularly valued about seeing Dr. Miller was the sense of working together to sort out what was happening inside my knees, and what tools & perspectives I can incorporate

to avoid similar problems going forward. Along with massage tools & educational books, her office has many charts, diagrams & sample skeletons to help visualize what's happening inside our bodies. And she has balance-improving tools, better pillows & beds, and chiropractic adjustment tools. A lot of resources that can be used to address not just the current problem, but also the bigger picture of unhealthy use patterns that caused the problem in the first place.

I also want to mention a few other things I've done that I feel have complimented Dr. Miller's laser therapy, massage tools, & increase in my 'barefoot walking' awareness:

1) I discovered a book on-line called "The Runner's Knee Bible" written by a physical therapist with years of experience in helping people recover from knee injuries. It explains that because the cartilage in our knees is inside a sac of synovial fluid (like all our joints), it gets very limited blood flow. The traditional view is that this means cartilage cannot heal. But the reality is that it can heal, just very slowly. New cartilage growth is slowly caused by the pumping action of repeated joint movement. The trick is to combine lots & lots of repetitions with very low weight so the injury is not re-strained while healing is happening.

Following the book's recommendation, I bought an adjustable incline press, and I've been spending an hour per day doing hundreds of squats at a very low weight (like wall squats but on a sliding tray that's angle can be adjusted to raise or lower the percentage of your body weight you are using). I stand on a partially inflated small ball while doing them, and slightly vary my leg angle while going up and down to get a more round - both things give my knees a more rounded work-out.

2) Plenty of sleep, fluids and good nutrition ("Barefoot Running", which Dr. Miller loaned me, has a great section on eating well). Supplements-wise, I'm taking glucosamine with chondroitin, and Ligaplex.

3) I'm avoiding wearing shoes that have heavy soles or constrict my toes

4) following Dr. Miller's reminders, I'm trying to be more aware of my limitations, to listen to any pain signals, and to recognize that I don't necessarily have the same capacities that I did in my 30s or 40s -- I used to sometimes ignore those signals in the desire to 'get the job done'

During my two weeks of R-I-C-E before first seeing Dr. Miller, and even for the first several weeks of laser therapy, I wasn't really sure if I'd be able to avoid knee surgery. I was beginning to feel healing happening, and the swelling receded, but I was still feeling limited in how weak my knee felt. It took awhile to really trust that the slow but steady arc of healing would continue, but it has, and using the incline press really seemed to help in regaining strength and in gently working the zones of soreness out. Now my knees feel much stronger & pain-free.

With Dr. Miller's assistance, and the things I mentioned above, I'm very glad to say that my knees have healed to the point that I've resumed daily life & work, and can even hike again. Step by conscious step. Thanks Chris.

- Scott Love  
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