

# Dysfunction

## TERMINOLOGY (SYNONYMS)

- Subluxation
- Spinal motion segment dysfunction
- Abnormal spinal movement

## INTRODUCTION

The phrase spinal segmental dysfunction refers to abnormal movement of a spinal motion segment. The abnormal movement may be passive or active. A spinal motion segment is defined as two adjacent vertebrae, the intervertebral disc between them, and the ligaments which support them. A spinal segment may move too much (hypermobile), may have limited movement (hypomobile), may move in an abnormal pattern (paradoxical movement) or it may not move at all (immobile or fixed). A normal spinal segment should have a little bounce detected with manual palpation. A loss of normal spinal segment joint play is a form of spinal segment hypomobility. Spinal segmental dysfunction can be further classified by whether there is associated reactive paraspinal muscle spasm when movement is evoked.

## PREVALENCE

Spinal segment dysfunction can occur in individuals of all ages. There is no predilection between males or females. Trauma to the spine from a simple sprain/strain to severe injury will cause a loss of normal intervertebral motion. Segmental dysfunction is likely to occur in the presence of degenerative changes of the spine; therefore, it is prevalent in elderly individuals.