

The Story Behind Chiropractic

The word "chiropractic" comes from the Greek words cheir (hand) and praxis (action) and literally means "done by hand." Instead of prescribing drugs or performing surgeries, chiropractors use manual treatments of the spine and joints, exercise therapy, massage, trigger point therapy and lifestyle changes to allow the body's natural state of health to fully express itself.

Like conventional medicine, chiropractic is based upon scientific principles of . . .

1. Diagnosis through testing and empirical observation
2. Treatment based upon the practitioner's rigorous training and clinical experience.

Unlike conventional medicine, which focuses on attempting to treat disease once it occurs, chiropractic attempts to improve the health of the individual in an effort to avoid illness in the first place. Most people would rather be healthy and avoid illness, if they could. This is one of the main reasons for the big upsurge in the popularity of chiropractic. People are recognizing the benefit of seeking an alternative to traditional medicine; one that will help them achieve and maintain optimal health.

Chiropractors understand that one of the main causes of pain and disease is the misalignment and abnormal motion of the vertebrae in the spinal column called a subluxation. Chiropractic works by removing these subluxations in the spine, thereby relieving pressure and irritation on the nerves, restoring joint mobility, and returning the body back to a state of normal function.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that chiropractic care is one of the most effective treatments for back pain, neck pain, headaches, whiplash, sports injuries and many other types of musculoskeletal problems. It has even been shown to be effective in reducing high blood pressure, decreasing the frequency of childhood ear infections and improving the symptoms of asthma.

The chiropractic approach to healthcare is holistic, meaning that it addresses your overall health. It recognizes that many lifestyle factors such as exercise, diet, rest and environment impact your health. For this reason, chiropractors recommend changes in lifestyle— eating, exercise, and sleeping habits—in addition to chiropractic care.

What truly differentiates doctors of chiropractic from any other healthcare professionals is the fact that chiropractors are the only professionals who are trained to diagnose and treat what are called spinal subluxations. The word "subluxation" comes from the Latin words meaning "to dislocate" (luxare) and "somewhat or slightly" (sub). So the term 'vertebral subluxation' literally means a slight dislocation (misalignment) of the bones in the spine. Although this term was adequate in the 1800s when much was still misunderstood about the human body, today the word "subluxation" has changed in meaning to capture the complex of neurological, structural

and functional changes that occur when a bone is “out of place.” For this reason chiropractors usually refer to subluxations of the spine as the "Vertebral Subluxation Complex", or "VSC" for short.

Chiropractors have known the dangers of the vertebral subluxation complex ever since the birth of the profession. More and more scientific research is demonstrating the tremendous detrimental impact that subluxation have on the tissue of the body. In order to be truly healthy, it is vital that your nervous system be functioning free of interference from subluxations. Chiropractors are the only health professionals trained in the detection, location, and correction of the vertebral subluxation complex through chiropractic care.

The chiropractic adjustment is a quick thrust applied to a vertebra for the purpose of correcting its position, movement or both. Adjustments are often accompanied by an audible release of gas that sounds like a “crack.” The sound sometimes shocks people a little bit the first couple times they get adjusted, but the sensation is usually relieving. Occasionally, minor discomfort is experienced, especially if the surrounding muscles are in spasm or the patient tenses up during the chiropractic procedure. There are times when the audible “cracking” does not occur. This is often due to either significant muscle tightness or that the patient may be having a hard time relaxing during their adjustments.

Chiropractic is so much more than simply a means of relieving pain. Ultimately, the goal of the chiropractic treatment is to restore the body to its natural state of optimal health. In order to accomplish this, I use a variety of treatment methods, including manual adjustments, massage, trigger point therapy, nutrition, exercise rehabilitation, massage, as well as counseling on lifestyle issues that impact your health. Since the body has a remarkable ability to heal itself and to maintain its own health, the primary focus is simply to remove those things which interfere with the body’s normal healing ability.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a chiropractic adjustment?

The chiropractic adjustment is a gentle, quick thrust to a particular joint, typically in the spine, intended to restore normal position and movement. Adjustments are important for releasing adhesions in the joint and reducing stress on the nervous system. Because of the fact that the nervous system is that master controller of all muscles and organs in the body, removing stress on the nervous system through chiropractic adjustments will frequently lead to improved health in the entire body.

How many adjustments will I need?

The total number of adjustments you need depends on five main factors: 1) your age, 2) your overall health, 3) the severity of your condition, 4) how long you have had your condition and 5) what your ultimate goals are. If you are young, in good health and have a mild condition that occurred very recently, you will need far fewer adjustments than if you are older, in poor general health and have been struggling with a problem for many years. The total number of adjustments you will need also depends on whether you are just interested in reducing the pain you are currently experiencing, or are interested in creating optimal long-term health.

Will adjustments hurt?

Usually not. There have been some patients of mine who have experienced mild soreness after being adjusted, but this is more of the exception. Most people feel better very quickly after being adjusted.

Have side effects or problems been reported from using chiropractic to treat back pain?

Patients may or may not experience side effects from chiropractic treatment. Effects may include temporary discomfort in parts of the body that were treated, headache, or tiredness. These effects tend to be minor and to resolve within 1 to 2 days.

Do I still need to see the chiropractor if my pain is gone?

It is very common for pain to disappear long before the total correction of your condition is attained. As in our discussion earlier in this chapter, pain is not a very good indicator of health. Often times people are completely unaware of problems that are developing in them because there is no pain associated with them. Consider heart disease, cancer, diabetes – the three top killers – don't have any symptoms at all until they have become very advanced. The same is true with cavities in your teeth – there is usually no pain until a cavity becomes severe. The point is that just because you are no longer experiencing pain does not mean that your problem no longer exists. It is important to continue being treated so that the underlying cause of the pain can be corrected.

Routine chiropractic care is one of the simplest ways to maintain the health of your body. Numerous research studies have shown that people who receive regular chiropractic care suffer fewer illnesses, injuries and degenerative diseases, and they report a better overall quality of life. In spite of the health benefits of chiropractic care, many people have never been to a chiropractor, most often because they don't really understand what chiropractic care is all about.

The bottom line is that chiropractic care is a safe, effective treatment for a wide range of physical complaints, such as headaches, neck pain, low back pain, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Thoracic Outlet Syndrome, stomach and gastrointestinal complaints, wrist, elbow and shoulder pain, knee, hip and ankle pain, scoliosis, otitis media, and a host of other problems. While most of these disorders resolve within a few weeks or months, routine chiropractic care will help ensure optimal health for life.

Can Chiropractors prescribe medication?

Currently, chiropractors do not prescribe medications, although I may refer someone to another provider for prescription medication if I deem it necessary. However, in most cases, patients are better off with physical, rather than chemical, treatments for physical problems.

Controversy

As successful as chiropractic has become, there are a lot of myths about chiropractic floating around in the general public. Times have definitely changed for the better, but the fact is that many people still do not understand what chiropractors do. Let's talk about a few of the more common myths about chiropractic.

Chiropractors are not real doctors.

Chiropractors are licensed as medical health care providers in every U.S. state and dozens of countries around the world. While the competition to attend chiropractic school is not as fierce as medical school, the chiropractic and medical school curricula are virtually identical. In fact, chiropractors have more hours of education than their medical counterparts. As part of their education, chiropractic students also complete approximately nine hundred hours of work in a clinical setting, assisting licensed chiropractors. Once chiropractic students graduate, they have to pass four sets of national board exams as well as state board exams in the states they want to practice.

Chiropractors receive extensive training, combined with many hours of practical work. Just like conventional medical doctors, chiropractors are medical professionals that are subject to the same testing, licensing and monitoring by state and national peer-reviewed boards. Federal and state programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid and Workers' Compensations programs cover chiropractic, and all federal agencies accept sick-leave certificates signed by doctors of chiropractic.

The biggest difference between chiropractors and medical doctors lies not in their education or diagnostic ability, but in their preferred method of treatment. Medical doctors are trained in the use of medicines (chemicals that affect your internal biochemistry) and surgery. Consequently, if you have a chemical problem, such as diabetes, hypothyroid or an infection, medical doctors can be very helpful. However, if your problem is that one of the bones in your spine is out of

place, or you have trigger points in your muscles that is causing pain, there is no chemical in existence that can fix it. You need a physical treatment to correct a physical problem. That's where chiropractic really shines. Chiropractors use physical treatments – adjustments, exercises, stretches, muscle therapy – to treat conditions that are physical, rather than chemical, in origin; such as back pain, muscle spasms, headaches, poor posture, etc.

Medical doctors don't like chiropractors.

The American Medical Association's opposition to chiropractic was at its strongest in the 1940s under the leadership of Morris Fishbein. Fishbein called chiropractors "rabid dogs" and referred to them as "playful and cute, but killers." He tried to portray chiropractors as members of an unscientific cult, caring about nothing but taking their patients money. Up to the late 1970s and early 1980s, the medical establishment purposely conspired to try to destroy the profession of chiropractic. In fact, in a landmark lawsuit in the 1980s found that the American Medical Association was guilty of conspiracy and was ordered to pay restitution.

In the 20 years since, the position of most medical doctors has changed; mostly because of several major studies that showed the superiority of chiropractic in treating a host of conditions, coupled with a better understanding among medical doctors about what chiropractors actually do. Many hospitals across the country now have chiropractors on staff and many chiropractic offices have medical doctors on staff. Chiropractors and medical doctors are now much more comfortable working together in cases where medical care is necessary as an adjunct to chiropractic care.

Once you start going to a chiropractor, you have to keep going the rest of your life.

This is a statement that we frequently hear when the topic of chiropractic care comes up in conversation. This statement is only partly true. You only have to continue going to the chiropractor as long as you wish to maintain the health of your neuromusculoskeletal system. Going to a chiropractor is much like going to the dentist, exercising at a gym or eating a healthier diet, as long as you keep it up, you continue to enjoy the benefits.

Many years ago, dentists convinced everyone that the best time to go to the dentist is before your teeth hurt – that routine dental care will help your teeth remain healthy for a long time. It is important to remember that, just like your teeth, your spine experiences normal wear and tear – you walk, drive, sit, lift, sleep and bend. Regular chiropractic care can help you feel better, move with more freedom, and stay healthier throughout your lifetime. Although you can enjoy the benefits of chiropractic care even if you are only treated for a short time, the real benefits come into play when you make chiropractic care a part of your lifestyle.

Chiropractic adjustments will cause you to have a stroke.

Strokes are definitely a serious event, no doubt, and there are some medical doctors who still tell their patients to avoid going to the chiropractor because sooner or later, they say, adjustments of the neck will cause a stroke. There is no denying that a possibility of this happening exists. However, the risk of suffering a stroke from a chiropractic adjustment is extremely small; about the risk of being struck by lightning. In fact, you are 70,000 times more likely to suffer a stroke from the daily use of aspirin to prevent heart attacks than to suffer a stroke from a chiropractic adjustment. You are 37,000 times more likely to suffer a stroke for some unknown reason than

to suffer a stroke from a chiropractic adjustment. When administered by a licensed doctor of chiropractic, adjustments are extremely safe.