

MIND AND BODY

How can chiropractors benefit your health?

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Back and neck pain are the chief complaints for which patients seek chiropractic help. Through [manual spinal manipulation](#), chiropractic care is a holistic therapy that focuses on maintaining healthy musculoskeletal and nervous systems to ensure overall wellness.

Effectiveness

The research about chiropractic care is growing. According to the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#), recent studies show that spinal manipulative therapy performed by a chiropractor, along with exercise, relieves neck pain more effectively than medication.

Furthermore, the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics reported that an integrated approach to health care -- including chiropractic care -- results in a 51.8 percent reduction in pharmaceutical costs and 43 percent fewer hospital admissions.

You should consider seeing a chiropractor if you experience frequent pain in your back, neck or joints, as well as headaches. This is especially so if intense soreness follows accidents, household chores or prolonged periods of poor posture.

Back and neck pain

Chiropractors are best known for safely and effectively treating acute back and neck pain, as well as headaches. Whereas a medical doctor might prescribe pain medicine, muscle relaxers or anti-inflammatory drugs, and an orthopedic doctor might suggest surgery, a chiropractor will treat your back problems by hand, through manipulation of the spine.

Nancy Elwartowski-Cooper, a pediatric and prenatal chiropractor, sees more and more referrals from medical doctors: "They (patients) are tired of the drugs and want answers to what is causing their problems."

Chiropractors bring the musculoskeletal structure into proper alignment. Chiropractors change the position of your body and apply pressure to particular points along the spine that are not properly aligned. This results in a popping noise similar to the one created when you crack your knuckles. The noise is created by a change in pressure in your joints as gas bubbles are released.

By adjusting the spine with their hands at particular pressure points, chiropractors unblock nerve energy and allow it to flow better down your spine and throughout your entire body. Repeated visits can, over time, realign your spine to optimize overall health.

Chiropractor Brian Elwartowski said the brain sends messages down the spinal cord and out through the nerves to the rest of your body. If certain nerves are squeezed by a twist in the spine, they won't function as well as if they were straight. "Chiropractic [care] allows the nerves to work at their most optimum ability," he said, "allowing the body to heal at its optimum ability."

Treatment plan

Many chiropractors seek to care for the whole person, from general wellness to disease prevention. They examine every patient, not only for the reason of their visit but also their level of health. After diagnosis, a chiropractor develops a treatment plan.

Keith Overland, president of the American Chiropractic Association, said, "This may include combinations of chiropractic manipulation, physical therapy and rehabilitative procedures for many musculoskeletal problems."

Some chiropractors provide nutrition advice, exercise recommendations, ergonomic and lifestyle counseling and so on. The successful management of chronic conditions may require a combination of these major components. This holistic approach can reduce the need for potentially addictive pain medication or invasive surgery.

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