

# Chiropractic Health Care

## Chiropractic Health Care

Chiropractic health care treats the whole body — not just what aches or hurts. Doctors of chiropractic use the integration of your bones, muscles, joints, spine, nerves, nutrition and stress management in treating you.

For example, a pinched nerve in your neck may cause a headache or a fall may cause lower back pain. By using spinal adjustments and rehabilitative exercises, chiropractors make sure your body is working at its best.

For example, chiropractors treat:

- carpal tunnel syndrome
- back pain or disc problems
- whiplash and sports injuries
- headaches or neck pain
- arm or leg pain.

Chiropractors use gentle, hands-on adjustments to the bones and joints of your spine, arms and legs to stop nerve irritation and pain.

Chiropractic care is not a replacement for medical care. Chiropractors do not prescribe medicine and do not do surgery.

Together, chiropractors and medical doctors work with you on your health care needs. A medical doctor may tell you to see a chiropractor for low back pain, headaches or a sports injury. A chiropractor may tell you to see a medical doctor for a muscle relaxer or anti-inflammatory medicine if needed.

## Benefits

In addition to pain relief, chiropractic care may also help you:

- manage stress
- prevent injuries during your daily activities such as sports or work
- maintain better posture
- learn how nutrition plays a role in your health.

## Risks

According to the International Chiropractors Association (ICA), chiropractic care is considered safe and effective in preventive and wellness care.

## Before Your First Visit

- Make a list of:
  - all the medicines you take, including prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, herbals, vitamins and other supplements
  - any questions or concerns you have.
- Plan to wear something in which you will feel comfortable. Consider wearing casual clothing instead of a dress, skirt or suit. If you will be going to your visit straight from work or another appointment, you may want to bring a change of clothes.

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## During Your First Visit

During your first visit, your chiropractor will do a health history and physical exam. During the exam, he or she will:

- evaluate your current health status
- ask you questions about your:
  - medicines, supplements or both
  - nutrition
  - symptoms.
- do tests, X-rays or both if needed
- talk with you about your treatment options. Together, you and your chiropractor will determine the best treatment plan for you.

You will also have your first treatment (adjustment) during this appointment.

During your treatment:

- You may be asked to lie down on the exam table (on your stomach, back, side or a combination of all three).
- Your chiropractor may:
  - do an adjustment on your spine or other parts of your body
  - use other therapies such as electrical stimulation
  - teach you a variety of exercises and movements to do at home
  - recommend you use heat, ice or both at home.

## What to Expect During Your Follow-up Visit(s)

During your follow-up visit(s), your chiropractor will continue using adjustments, therapies or both to treat you, according to your plan. Together, you and your chiropractor will decide how many treatments you need to feel your best.

## Common Questions

*Once I see a chiropractor, do I have to keep going for the rest of my life?*

Chiropractors help you the most they can in the shortest amount of time in many different ways, such as teaching you a variety of exercises and movements to help increase your daily functioning.

*Will the treatment(s) hurt?*

Your first treatment may be a little uncomfortable because it is new. Most often adjustments don't hurt — they stop your pain.

Adjustments:

- help you get your motion back
- release muscle tension in your spine or other parts of your body.

## Doctors of Chiropractic Care

Chiropractic students must have a college degree before entering an accredited chiropractic college. They spend 4 years studying anatomy, cardiology, dermatology, gastrointestinal disorders, geriatrics, infectious diseases, obstetrics, pathology, pediatrics and X-ray, among others.

As part of their education, students must work in a clinic as part of an internship program before graduation. Doctors of chiropractic must take continuing education seminars each year to renew their license to practice.

## Whom to Call With Questions

Talk with your chiropractor or medical doctor if you have questions about chiropractic care.