

Chiropractic Questions

Chiropractic Questions:

Q:What is chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a health care profession that focuses on disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the nervous system, and the effects of these disorders on general health. Chiropractic care is used most often to treat back pain, neck pain, pain in the joints of the arms or legs, and headaches.

Doctors of Chiropractic practice a drug-free, hands-on approach to health care that includes patient examination, diagnosis and treatment. Chiropractors have broad diagnostic skills and are also trained to recommend therapeutic and rehabilitative exercises, as well as to provide nutritional, dietary and lifestyle counseling.

The most common therapeutic procedure performed by doctors of chiropractic is known as “spinal manipulation,” also called “chiropractic adjustment.” The purpose of manipulation is to restore joint mobility by manually applying a controlled force into joints that have become restricted in their movement – as a result of a tissue injury. Tissue injury can be caused by a single traumatic event, such as improper lifting of a heavy object, or through repetitive stresses, such as sitting in an awkward position with poor spinal posture for an extended period of time. In either case, injured tissues undergo physical and chemical changes that can cause inflammation, pain, and diminished function for the sufferer. Manipulation, or adjustment of the affected joint and tissues, restores mobility, thereby alleviating pain and muscle tightness, and allowing tissues to heal.

In many cases, such as lower back pain, chiropractic care may

be the primary method of treatment. When other medical conditions exist, chiropractic care may complement or support medical treatment by relieving the musculoskeletal aspects associated with the condition.

A chiropractor will review a patient's health history and conduct an examination to determine whether chiropractic therapy is appropriate or not appropriate. Chiropractors will readily refer patients to the appropriate health care provider when chiropractic care is not suitable for the patient's condition, or the condition warrants co-management in conjunction with other members of the health care team.

Q:Will a chiropractic adjustment hurt?

In the majority of cases an adjustment is painless. In fact, most patients will feel an immediate relief with an adjustment. In some cases – such as following a recent injury – the muscles and ligaments around the joint may be painful and inflamed. When this happens any pressure on the area will provide some discomfort, including an adjustment. If the area is too tender or sensitive to tolerate the pressure from a chiropractic adjustment we will use other techniques such as gentle mobilizations or soft tissue therapies to help facilitate healing and de-sensitize the area so an adjustment will be more tolerable in subsequent visits.

Q:Is it true that once you get a chiropractic adjustment, you have to keep coming back?

The short answer is no. If you have a specific problem that has been treated with chiropractic and it is resolved to your satisfaction, you can stop chiropractic treatment until this or another problem occurs. However, ask yourself how many times you have visited a dentist? Like most people, you've probably gone dozens of times. Why? Most people would respond that they see a dentist for cleaning and check-ups to maintain the health of their teeth. People see chiropractors

on a regular basis to maintain the health of their spine. Like your dentist and like many of the medical experts are now recognizing, prevention is the key to reducing recurrences of existing health conditions and minimizing new injuries in the future.

So, the long answer is yes, we want you to keep coming back, but just periodically. Periodic chiropractic care minimizes spinal and nerve stresses, reduces recurrences of old injuries, prevents new injuries from developing, and minimizes degenerative processes, which enhances overall health and wellness. Our job is to offer the very best care and your job is to decide how much of it you want.

Q:Is chiropractic covered by my insurance plan?

The medical services plan of British Columbia (MSP) does cover a portion (\$23.00 per treatment) of chiropractic treatment, but only for individuals with a gross income of less than \$30 000 per year for a maximum of ten treatments. Fortunately, most extended health insurance plans through your employer cover chiropractic. The average coverage ranges from \$300 to \$500 per year. Contact your insurance policy provider to determine the amount and extent of your coverage.

Q:Do I need a referral to see a chiropractor?

No, chiropractors are licensed as primary health care providers like medical doctors and dentists. As such, they do not require a referral. If yours is not a chiropractic case, a responsible chiropractor will refer you to the appropriate health care provider.

Q:Is chiropractic safe?

Chiropractic is widely recognized as one of the safest, drug-free, non-invasive therapies available for the treatment of headache, and neck and back pain. It has an excellent safety

record. However, no health treatment is completely free of potential adverse effects. Even common over-the-counter medicines carry a risk.

Most patients experience immediate relief following an adjustment, however, some may experience temporary pain, stiffness or slight swelling. Some patients may also experience temporary dizziness, local numbness, or radiating pain. However, adverse effects associated with spinal adjustment are typically minor and short-lived.

Q:Do chiropractic treatments cause strokes?

Neck adjustment, particularly of the top two vertebrae of the spine, has on rare occasions been associated with stroke and stroke-like symptoms. This risk is considerably lower than those serious adverse events associated with many common health treatments such as long-term use of non-prescription pain relievers or birth control pills. While estimates vary, a range of one to two events per million neck adjustments is the ratio generally accepted by the research community.

An extensive commentary on chiropractic care, published in the February 2002 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, which is the journal of the American College of Physicians, reviewed more than 160 reports and studies on chiropractic. It states the following with regard to the safety of neck adjustment: "The apparent rarity of these accidental events has made it difficult to assess the magnitude of the complication risk. No serious complication has been noted in more than 73 controlled clinical trials or in any prospectively evaluated case series to date."

A Canadian study, published in 2001 in the medical journal *Stroke*, also concluded that stroke associated with neck adjustment is so rare that it is difficult to calculate an accurate risk ratio. The study was conducted by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES) and the authors have

stated: "The evidence to date indicates that the risk associated with chiropractic manipulation of the neck is both small and inaccurately estimated. The estimated level of risk is smaller than that associated with many commonly used diagnostic tests or prescription drugs."

The most recent research into the association between neck adjustment and stroke is bio mechanical studies to assess what strain, if any, neck adjustment may place on the vertebral arteries. The preliminary findings of this ongoing work indicate that neck adjustment is done well within the normal range of motion and that neck adjustment is "very unlikely to mechanically disrupt the VA [vertebral artery]."

There are many risk factors for stroke including blood clotting problems, hypertension, smoking, high cholesterol, birth control pills, heart problems and trauma such as blows to the head from car accidents, sports injuries or falls. Some strokes happen spontaneously with no obvious cause during activities of daily living such as backing up a car. A patient's health history and activities have to be examined very carefully in order to determine the most probable cause of a stroke.

Q:Is an x-ray required for chiropractic treatment?

X-rays can play an important role in diagnosis and are taken when a need has been determined after taking a patient case history and conducting a physical examination. Chiropractors receive 360 hours of education in radiology covering a full range of topics from protection to X-ray interpretation and diagnosis. Governments in every province have recognized the training and competence of chiropractors to take and interpret X-rays and have granted them this right. At Rosemary Heights Chiropractic, we do not have X-Ray facilities available but we do refer out to X-Ray facilities as the need requires.