

Chiropractic

“Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Psalm 4:4

Chiropractic is a health care profession that focuses on diagnosing, treating, and preventing disorders of the musculoskeletal system. It focuses on how these disorders affect a person’s nervous system and general health. The word chiropractic literally means “done by hand.” Chiropractors (Doctors of Chiropractic) are not medical doctors, and do not prescribe medications or do surgery. They use spinal manipulation to realign vertebra (individual bones of the spine) to alleviate pressure on nerves and muscles. All medical communities will agree that the body is controlled by nerve impulses that originate in the brain, and travel along the spinal cord. Whenever the brain sends a command, it needs to travel from the head to the appropriate muscles. There are 31 pairs of spinal nerves that shoot out from the spinal cord, and all of these are protected by the vertebrae of the spine itself. If the vertebrae are misaligned, or twisted out of place, it is believed that the flow of the message along the nerve pathways can be restricted. Realigning vertebrae relieves pressure on any previously pinched nerves, which allows impulses from the brain to travel more easily. The hoped for result is better overall health.

Research shows that chiropractors can be very effective in treating back and neck pain, arm and leg pain, and tension headaches. Since the treatment involves a “laying on of hands,” some relief is attributed to this act of touching and connecting to another human being. The “popping sound” heard when a spine is manipulated is not evidence that things were out of place, but can be compared to cracking your knuckles—they are not out of place, they simply make a noise because you manipulate them. While some Chiropractors tout their ability to improve all, or most, diseases by correcting vertebral subluxations (misalignments), there is little or no scientific evidence support this claim.

There are two main groups of chiropractors: straight and mixed. The straight chiropractors are the oldest group, and largely follow the teachings of the man who invented the practice in 1895, Daniel David Palmer. He felt that by realigning the spine, communication was improved between the brain and the body, thereby reducing the risk for disease (dis-ease or disharmony.)

Mixed chiropractors comprise about 25% of the graduating chiropractors. They use more than simple realignment of the spine as their treatment, using naturopathy (a holistic approach) and physical therapy devices.

Straight chiropractors limit their practice to correcting vertebral subluxations, or realigning the spine. This is a practice generally accepted by the medical community. However, some chiropractic practices have been compared to a “cult.” Beware of a chiropractor who claims that all diseases are the result of a misalignment of the spine, or who insist you sign a long-term contract. Some even claim that immunizations, modern medicine, fluoridation, and the pasteurization of milk are unnecessary and harmful. Scare tactics raise questions of credibility.

Risks associated with chiropractic treatment are very low, with serious complications occurring in only 1 out of every 3-4 million patients. Compare this to the aftermath of cervical surgery—3-4% of these patients have complications, and 4,000-10,000 per million actually die! Keep in mind that these statistics include accident victims and severely injured people who had no choice preoperatively, but it still reinforces the relative safety of chiropractic treatment.

All chiropractic doctors have at least 5 years of schooling, which includes four years at an accredited Chiropractic college. They then take four national board exams. Afterward, they must earn a license by sitting for a state examination. These are well-educated and devoted professionals. To choose a chiropractor, you can ask friends or your family physician. Limit yourself to those who treat musculoskeletal problems and back pain. Simply use your head and your own personal values when choosing a chiropractor.

For most conditions, significant improvement should be seen within a few visits.

Blessings, Nurse Karen