

What Happens in a Chiropractic Office?

Have you ever asked yourself what happens in a chiropractic office? It never seemed like much of a mystery to me, but I have used chiropractors since I was a kid and have been one for 28 years. It always seemed fairly obvious to me. However, several recent conversations I have had make it clear to me that the majority of the public have no idea what we do for our patients or how we do it. So, in this brief article I will attempt to clarify this for the reader.

First, you need to understand a basic chiropractic premise. That is, your body has an innate healing ability that will cure most of our ailments if we just don't get in the way of our own recovery. This means that we need to assure our bodies receive good nutrition, proper exercise, and have a healthy nervous system. Why a healthy nervous system? This brings us to the second premise of chiropractic; the nervous system is the central organizing power in our bodies.

The nervous system assures that all our organs function properly, our minds are clear and healthy, our bodies are well supplied with nutrients and have adequate vascular perfusion, and we maintain our freedom of motion. It even exerts a strong influence on the immune system; but more on that later.

The third premise is that alterations in the function of the spine, other joints, soft tissues, and organs can all have an adverse effect on the health of the nervous system. In other words, when the spine is not working correctly (chiropractors call this state a subluxation) then the nervous system doesn't function properly and an ill state will occur. These subluxations can take the form of a joint not moving fully (fixation), too much (hypermobility), or having been damaged (such as a disc herniation). All these conditions can be helped by chiropractic therapies.

Now most people understand that these subluxations will cause back pain, headaches, and neck pain. Many also understand that this will also cause leg pain such as sciatica, or arm pain such as a "pinched nerve." However, few also understand that subluxations affect a wide array of systemic disorders such as acid reflux, a poorly functioning immune system affecting allergies or asthma, or cardiovascular and adrenal functioning such as in hypertension or fatigue. All these conditions can be caused or exacerbated by subluxation. Now here's the catch. These conditions can also cause the subluxation in the first place! This is called a viscerosomatic reflex – your organs' function impacting the health of the nervous system.

These broad strokes give you an idea of the basic chiropractic premise that if we correct the subluxations we will have an impact on not just the musculoskeletal pain you experience, but we can also affect your overall health. But since these conditions have an effect on the nervous system we must simultaneously address them as well.

We address the neuro-musculoskeletal conditions, as you might imagine, with a combination of chiropractic manipulative techniques, stretching, rehabilitative exercise programs, and soft tissue techniques. We also use physiological therapeutics such as traction, electric muscle stimulation, ultrasound, etc. to augment the other chiropractic techniques and facilitate healing. We have patients perform home exercises and use ice or heat as appropriate. We may have them use braces or supports or prescribe orthotics to improve their body biomechanics from the ground up to stabilize the spine, speed healing, or prevent future episodes. Chiropractors using traditional taping procedures and kinesiotaping (that colored tape you see people wearing) to improve joint and soft tissue function.

Chiropractors may use nutritional supplements to assist the body in healing or to enhance your health. Food source supplements, synthetic vitamins, enzymes, and herbs are all important adjuncts in the healing process. Often these supplements are aimed not directly at the subluxation but rather at the underlying organs which may be causing a viscerosomatic reflex and preventing the full correction of the subluxation. This is why chiropractors have historically had great success helping patients with seasonal allergies, gastric reflux, even weight gain, and hypertension.

The next time you drive by a chiropractic office you will know that there is a lot going on in there. While chiropractors do spinal manipulation as a majority of their therapies, they have a broad assortment of therapeutic options for their patients. And while they are still thought of as spinal experts, the vast majority of chiropractors treat most musculoskeletal disorders including muscle pulls, joint sprains, arm and foot complaints as well as providing health and wellness services for their patients.

Chiropractors are the original wellness experts.

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