

What is chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a registered primary health care profession. Chiropractors are trained to diagnose, treat, manage and prevent disorders of the musculoskeletal system (bones, joints and muscles). They have a specialist interest in neck and back pain.

Chiropractors use a range of techniques to reduce pain, improve function and increase mobility, including hands-on manipulation of the spine.

What happens when I see a chiropractor?

When you see a chiropractor for the first time, they will do a detailed assessment of your health. You will be asked for information about your current condition, and also about your medical history and overall health.

Some of the questions you will be asked may not seem important, but they will help your chiropractor to establish an overall picture of your health, and determine whether chiropractic care is appropriate for your condition.

If your chiropractor is unable to help, or decides that some other treatment would be more beneficial for your condition; you will be referred to your GP, or to another appropriate health care professional.

Physical examination

After assessing your condition and overall health, your chiropractor will carry out a physical examination (unless there is a specific reason for them not to). A gown will be available for you to wear as you may be asked to remove some of your clothes.

Your chiropractor will perform a range of tests that may include assessment of your posture and range of movement. They may do things such as measure your blood pressure and examine your abdomen to help find out what is wrong.

Further tests

Once the initial assessment and physical examination has been done, your chiropractor may require you to have further investigations such as an X-ray (or another type of scan such as CT or MRI) or a blood test. If these are required, your chiropractor will explain why they are necessary, and how and when they will be arranged.

Care plan

After these assessments and tests, your chiropractor will explain what is wrong and whether your condition can be helped by chiropractic treatment. If they think chiropractic treatment will help, they will give you a care plan, which will set out what you can expect when receiving chiropractic care, the costs of care and the treatment options that are available to you. You will also be told about exercises and lifestyle changes that can help you to manage your condition and assist with your recovery.

You will be able to ask questions so that you fully understand what treatment is being proposed. If you are happy to proceed, you will be asked to give your written consent to treatment.

Your chiropractor will keep all details about your health and treatment strictly confidential. No one will be allowed to see your records without your permission.

Treatment

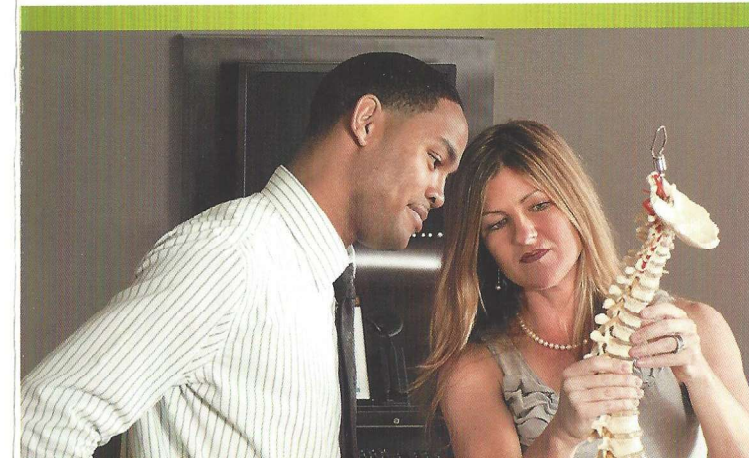
Chiropractors are trained in using manipulation to free stiff or restricted joints. This can also be called 'adjustments' or 'manual therapy'. Manipulation involves the chiropractor using their hands to apply quick, precise thrusts to the restricted joints. During manipulation there may be popping sounds (similar to the 'crack' heard when people flex their knuckles). This is quite harmless. It is just the sound of gas bubbles popping in the fluid of the joints as pressure is released.

Treatment may also include massage, stretching, electrotherapy and the gradual moving of joints ('mobilisation'). Some chiropractors use medical acupuncture techniques, while others may use a hand-held instrument called an 'activator' to manipulate joints.

Self-help advice and rehabilitative care form an important part of chiropractic treatment. You will be given advice on how to manage your condition and prevent it from recurring. This may involve the application of ice or heat to reduce pain and inflammation, and advice on activity, posture and exercises you can do at home.

Chiropractic treatment often takes place over a number of weeks, particularly if you have had the problem for a long time. Your chiropractor will discuss your programme of care with you, which will usually involve a series of treatments being given at defined intervals.

Throughout the course of your care, your chiropractor will be able to answer any questions you might have about the management of your condition and your treatment.



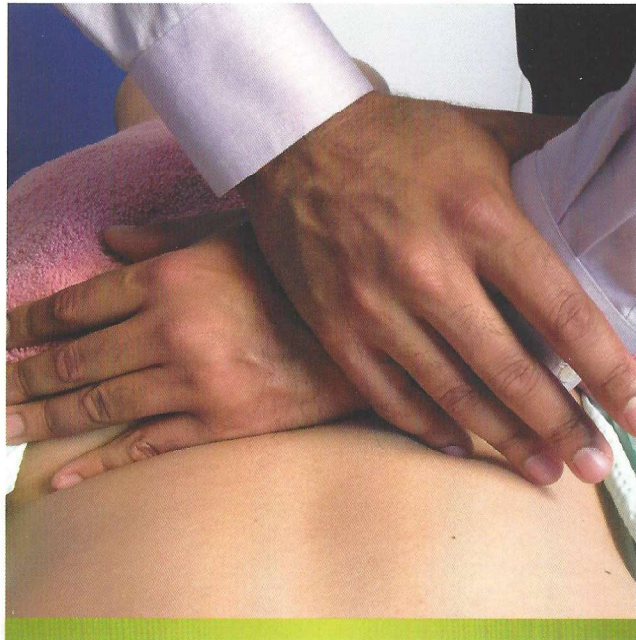
Chiropractic is safe and effective

As with any form of treatment or exercise that is applied to muscles and joints, there can sometimes be minor short-term pain or discomfort. In nearly all cases, this is due to temporary irritation and quickly goes away. Some people may also experience symptoms such as mild headache, stiffness or soreness, tiredness, or a temporary increase in pain after their treatment.

If you experience severe pain, or pain that continues for more than a day or so after your treatment, speak to your chiropractor as soon as possible.

The likelihood of you having serious side effects following chiropractic treatment is extremely rare. There are a small number of reports that have linked manipulation of the neck with stroke, but there is no clear evidence of this. Research has shown that the risk of serious complications following spinal manipulation is extremely low. If, following an assessment, your chiropractor identifies any possible risks, techniques other than manipulation can be used.

If you have any worries about the risks or side-effects of chiropractic treatment, your chiropractor will be able to discuss these concerns with you.



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