

Chiropractic Care and Children

Children benefit from chiropractic care for the same problems for which adults are treated, which are predominantly musculo-skeletal disorders. For example, children have a fairly high incidence of back pain and other musculo-skeletal problems caused by participation in sports, sitting in desks at school, computer activities, and the frequent tumbles and falls active children experience.

Chiropractic care is widely recognized as one of the safest, drug-free, surgery-free therapies available for the treatment of spinal pain syndromes. Few other therapies can demonstrate a better safety record. Provincial governments across Canada recognize that the chiropractic profession's scope of practice includes treating patients of all ages.

Are chiropractors trained to treat children? Yes. Chiropractors have seven years of university level education and training including 756 hours of training exclusively in adjustment techniques. Treatment for children is adapted to the age and smaller frame of the child and is delivered in a gentle manner to which children respond well.

What childhood conditions can chiropractors treat? More than 44 studies have been conducted into the effectiveness of chiropractic treatment for neck and back pain alone and there is well-documented evidence of the prevalence of back pain in children. Young children can also benefit from a spinal check-up at key stages in the same way that they benefit from eye examinations and dental check-ups. For example, starting to sit, crawl and walk are developmental points when a check-up will confirm that the spine is functioning properly or provide an early warning of any potential problems.

Chiropractors also consistently see evidence that spinal adjustment of infants and children has many positive effects for a variety of conditions, however; well-controlled research studies are required to better understand some of the benefits that are commonly seen in practice. As research unfolds, studies are confirming these benefits. For example, in recent years there have been two important studies investigating the effectiveness of chiropractic care for treating childhood colic and asthma.

In 1999, a research report published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* concluded that "spinal manipulation is effective in relieving infantile colic." The study compared the effect of chiropractic treatment with a commonly prescribed medication used to relieve infantile colic. The results of this study are so compelling that the Danish Public Health Authority has given its public health nurses approval to refer infants with colic to chiropractors.

Another study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1998, looked at chiropractic care as complementary therapy for children with medically-managed asthma. The study concluded that while chiropractic treatment did not affect lung function as measured by spirometry, there was a trend toward improvement in the patients' quality of life based on reduction in the amount of medication taken, as well as diminished severity of asthma attacks.

Can chiropractic treatment replace medical care? No. Depending on the patient's condition, chiropractic care may be the primary treatment for the symptoms. In other situations, chiropractic care may be one aspect of treatment. Chiropractors frequently work in partnership with other health professionals where the skills of both apply to enhancing a patient's well-being.

As well, chiropractors will refer patients to other health professionals when appropriate. The profession has a very cooperative relationship with family physicians who are a major source of referral to chiropractors.

Do Canadian pediatricians support chiropractic care for children? The chiropractic profession supports an integrative and collaborative approach to children's health care and welcomes both jointly managed patient care and cooperative research into children's health with the paediatric profession. The Canadian Paediatric Society's position statement on chiropractic care encourages physicians to co-manage care when patients are also receiving treatment from a chiropractor.

For more information on the chiropractic profession and chiropractic care visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association website at www.ccachiro.org or the Back Pain Channel at www.medbroadcast.com.

This document was written and distributed by the Chiropractic Communications Working Group (CCWG). The CCWG is comprised of representatives of the Canadian Chiropractic Association, Ontario Chiropractic Association, Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, and Canadian Chiropractic Protective Association.

