

WELL BEING



BACK IN ACTION

CHIROPRACTIC CARE FOR BACK PAIN

By Amanda N. Wegner

EIGHT IN 10 AMERICANS WILL EXPERIENCE BACK PAIN IN THEIR LIFETIME. It's the second most-common reason for office visits and costs the country over \$50 billion each year ... and that's just in easily identified costs such as lost productivity, treatment, medication and the like.

But painkillers and intrusive treatments aren't the best answers for low back pain, which is often due to muscular or skeletal issues.

"Unfortunately, 80 percent of society is medically oriented. They want to take a pill. They want the quick fix. But there are plenty of complementary and alternative care options that can offer the same results, and often better results, than traditional medicine. That includes chiropractic," says Dr. Terry J. Dobbs of Burlington Family Chiropractic.

And research shows that chiropractic is especially effective in the treatment of low back pain.

Safe and "Astounding"

"Chiropractic," says Dr. Jeffrey Buntrock of Lake Geneva Chiropractic, "is incredibly safe with little or no side effects, and the benefits can be astounding."

Research backs that last statement. One study in the medical journal *Spine* showed a 450-percent increase in the number of patients who fully recovered through chiropractic care versus those only using medication for back pain.

"Basically," says Dobbs, summing up the research, "for every two patients who recovered from back pain with medication, nine recovered with chiropractic."

The central nervous system, which tells the body when to stop and go, think, react and breathe (and much more) runs through the spine. Chiropractic works by relieving the imbalances and misalignments of the spine, called "subluxations," that can accumulate, interfere with optimal spinal health, and result in pain, poor health and other physical symptoms. By restoring spinal function with chiropractic adjustments, the nerve interference is removed and health improves.

"Chiropractic works with your body to address the cause of the pain," says Buntrock. "Many methods in traditional medicine simply mask the pain, treat the symptom or eliminate the inflammation without resolving why the pain was present in the first place. Chiropractic looks to find the cause of the problem and address that issue; it does this by restoring proper biomechanics in the spine and restoring normal function."

Prescription for Spinal Hygiene
For a new patient, the first visit with a

chiropractor includes a health history, a physical exam and possible X-rays to get a clear picture of the spine. During this first visit, the chiropractor will also rule out any conditions, such as osteoporosis, which would be contraindicated for treatment.

"The goal of all this intake work is to determine what the underlying cause is," says Dobbs. "It might be musculoskeletal. Or it might be nutritional, ergonomics, an allergy ... a lot of things that you might not think would be directly related to your pain."




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Depending on the provider, a spinal adjustment may be given on the first appointment, based on the condition. Adjustments involve the practitioner putting his or her hands on the spine and applying force to allow better movement in a specific location of the spine.

The manual adjustments, and the popping and cracking that may accompany them, can be difficult for some patients to stomach, but “things have changed even in the last 10 years, and light touch, little force and instrumentation can make a big difference,” says Dobbs.

Knowing when to call for treatment is often a point of confusion for people. Falls, trips and being a weekend warrior might cause temporary pain; Dobbs recommends that if the pain persists for three or four days, it’s time to be seen.

Adds Buntrock: “Generally the longer one waits, the longer it takes for symptoms resolve. Symptoms are usually the last thing to appear.”

With its emphasis on wellness and addressing the root cause of pain, back problems usually require multiple chiropractic appointments. The duration of care is dependent on several factors including severity of injury, degeneration of the spine, age of the patient, how long the condition has been present. Children and young adults respond fairly quickly to chiropractic care compared to the elderly, who generally have much more wear and tear on their bodies and spines.

“Probably the biggest misconception about chiropractic is that once you begin, you will have to get adjustments for the rest of your life,” says Buntrock. There is no obligation to continue with chiropractic care once the original condition is resolved, but many patients choose periodic care to maintain their health and prevent issues from returning.

“Chiropractic is beneficial in treating neck pain, low back pain, arthritis and headaches, although it is certainly not limited to this; many people see chiropractors for overall health and wellness,” says Buntrock. “Think of it as spinal hygiene.” ▲



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