

# **MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHIROPRACTIC**

We, at Hartwell Chiropractic and Wellness Center PC, want to make sure you know the truth about chiropractic care. We also don't want you to be confused by misleading information that is based on rumors and not on facts. Scientific research supports chiropractic care as a safe and effective alternative to drugs and surgery.

You can help dispel these myths by sharing the following facts with friends, family and co-workers. Learning the truth about this revolutionary health-care option could dramatically improve your loved one's health- and their lives!

## **MYTH # 1: Chiropractic care is only good for back problems.**

Although doctors of chiropractic (DC's) excel at providing thorough evaluations and swift, all-natural relief from back pain, chiropractors are much more than mere "back doctors".

Chiropractors are specialists in the neuro-musculo-skeletal systems. That means any problem with nerves, muscles, bones or joints would be fair game for a chiropractor to evaluate and consider treatment for. Conditions such as headache, neck pain and stiffness, numbness and tingling, shoulder or elbow tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, ankle sprain, plantar fasciitis, knee and hip pain, digestive problems, and asthma, are commonly successfully treated with chiropractic. DC's are trained to know when it is appropriate to refer patients to other specialists if needed.

Doctors of chiropractic are prevention specialists who focus on warding off disease and injury, rather than masking symptoms with medication. By caring for the whole person, chiropractors help patients create winning wellness plans that combine regular chiropractic checkups with exercise recommendations, nutritional counseling, stress reduction programs and other lifestyle adjustments. Spinal health is the cornerstone of the chiropractic approach to prevention and treatment.

Chiropractors work to keep patients' spines free of *vertebral subluxations*, areas of the spine where movement is restricted or bones (vertebrae) are out of alignment. Subluxations are linked with a myriad of ailments in addition to back pain, such as ear infection, vertigo (dizziness), headache, high blood pressure, sciatic leg pain and many others. Scientific evidence also suggests that vertebral subluxations have a negative effect on the immune system. (J Manipulative Physiol. The 1992;15:38-9)

Chiropractors correct vertebral subluxations with gentle maneuvers called chiropractic adjustments or spinal manipulations.

## **MYTH #2: Chiropractic adjustments hurt.**

New patients are often apprehensive about receiving their first chiropractic adjustment. Much of this fear comes from knowing that a "cracking" sound results from some adjustments. However, this sound (called a cavitation) is simply a drop in pressure within a joint, which occurs when a "stuck" joint becomes "unstuck". Cavitation is NOT the sound of bones cracking or rubbing against each other.

Chiropractors are extensively trained to perform adjustments gently--- and to custom tailor these maneuvers for each individual's unique body type. The vast majority of patients experience no discomfort whatsoever from adjustments. Rather, most patients report that they enjoy the procedure and find it relaxing.

## **MYTH #3: Once you begin chiropractic care, you must continue it for the rest of your life.**

The idea that chiropractic is "addictive"---or that patients must continue care forever to maintain relief from a specific injury---is a common misconception. This myth is perpetuated by some faction of the health insurance industry and other groups that focus on "quick fix" approaches like

drugs and surgery, which often fail to provide lasting results and have potentially hazardous side effects. In contrast, doctors of chiropractic concentrate on prevention.

The truth is, most chiropractic patients who seek care for pain relief recover from their symptoms within a short period of time. In 1994, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR), a division of the US Department of Health and Human Services, confirmed this claim after intensive investigation. The AHCPR states that: “for patients with acute low-back symptoms without radiculopathy, the scientific evidence suggest spinal manipulation is effective in reducing pain and perhaps speeding recovery within the first month of symptoms.”

It is true that popping a pill is faster than phoning Hartwell Chiropractic for an appointment. But unlike medication, chiropractic produces relief without chemical toxicity or harmful side effects to the body. We strive to treat the cause of the pain and not just squelch symptoms. Many patients choose to continue periodic checkups after their symptoms have subsided, to ward off other future ailments.

With chiropractic care, many patients become more “aware” of how their body is functioning. Once they have experienced how it feels to have their spine “in line”, they want to make sure to continue that feeling of optimum function. Our patients often notice other benefits to their treatment than just muscle or joint pain reduction. Many experience improved: digestion, blood pressure, brain function, breathing, and strength. It only makes sense to continue with something that offers so many benefits with no side effects.

Just as most people visit their dentist regularly to remove plaque before it triggers tooth decay, so chiropractic “maintenance check-ups” aid in preventing a number of health problems down the line. Many wise individuals will exercise on a regular basis to cut down on the buildup of fat in artery walls in an effort to prevent heart disease, and just to “feel healthy”. In the same way chiropractic patients often report a feeling of “wellness” with regular care. So our patients who come regularly are no more “addicted” to chiropractic than those who individuals who see their dentist regularly--- or who work out a few hours a week---are addicted to teeth cleaning or to exercise.

#### **MYTH #4: Chiropractic is unsafe.**

According to a wealth of scientific evidence, chiropractic is an extremely safe health-care option. This is especially true when the alternatives such as medication and surgery are considered. Even the seemingly “gentle” class of over-the-counter medications called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) has disastrous side effects. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 76,000 people are hospitalized each year due to adverse reactions to NSAIDs. And an estimated 7,600 will die this year alone as a direct result of NSAIDs. The nervous system controls everything in your body. Chiropractic adjustments help assure that your nervous system is functioning properly by safely aligning spinal vertebrae. Malpractice premiums are based on the frequency of incidents that occur in a particular profession. The cost for chiropractors to carry malpractice insurance is mere fraction of the cost that medical doctors pay, because the research shows that chiropractic is safe.

#### **MYTH #5: Chiropractors are poorly educated.**

If you think doctors of chiropractic aren't well educated, think again. Here are the facts: Prior to applying to chiropractic college, students must complete the identical “pre-med” college curriculum that medical students follow. This include courses in physics, chemistry, biology, psychology and liberal arts. These prerequisite courses take at least two years to complete. Chiropractic college consists of another 4 years of full-time study. The average number of basis science hours taken is 1,420, including approximately 570 hours of anatomy, 305 hours of physiology, 205 hours of pathology, 150 hours of biochemistry, 120 hours of microbiology, and 70 hours of public health. Chiropractic schools like Western States Chiropractic College in Portland,

where we doctors attended, devote an average of 3,380 hours to clinical education, with about 2,000 hours spent in chiropractic clinical sciences. The remaining 1,400 hours are spent in clinical internships.

That's just the beginning. Completing six years of intense study isn't enough to become a doctor of chiropractic. He or she must pass a series of four comprehensive National Board examinations, as well as State Board testing including jurisprudence, before obtaining a license to practice in Oregon.

**MYTH #6: Massage therapy or Physical Therapy produces the same result as chiropractic.**

Massage therapy is a highly effective, drug-free approach to relieving strained muscles, increasing circulation, easing stress and inducing deep relaxation. Research also shows that massage therapy boosts the immune system. Because of these benefits, we and many other chiropractic clinics have Licensed Massage Therapists (LMTs) as part of our staff. We often recommend patients receive massage prior to their adjustment in an effort to relax tight muscles and prepare the body for the manipulation. Despite the benefits, however, massage therapy is not a substitute for chiropractic care because it does not correct spinal subluxations (discussed earlier). Unlike chiropractors, massage therapists are not doctors. They do not have the extensive training that qualifies doctors to perform spinal adjustments or to diagnose medical disorders.

Physical Therapists (PTs) are also not doctors. The therapy they provide typically focuses on restoring strength and flexibility through stretches and resistance exercises. They can perform mobilization techniques to joint, but cannot provide spinal or other joint manipulations or adjustments. We will at times refer a patient to a local PT, but the vast majority of patients are able to perform the rehab exercises, that we instruct, in their own home.

**MYTH #7: Chiropractic is expensive.**

Industry studies reveal that chiropractic costs less than traditional medical care when chiropractors are the first doctors visited. (Med Care 1996;34:191-204)

Researchers at Oakland University focused on patients suffering from one or more of 493 conditions. Roughly one quarter of the 395,641 patients studied were cared for by doctors of chiropractic. Findings revealed "patients receiving chiropractic care experienced significantly lower health-care costs." Specifically, chiropractic patients saved approximately \$1,000 each over a 2 year period. (J Manipulative Physical Ther. 1993;16:291-9)

Another study looked at 3,062 workers' compensation claims for low-back pain. The analysis found that the compensation costs of claims for injuries treated by medical practitioners were 10 times the cost of those handled by chiropractors. (J Occup Med 1991;33:847-52).

At Hartwell Chiropractic, we are very mindful that many patients have very tight budgets. We have reasonable rates and payment plans are available. We offer time of service discounts to those patients who do not have insurance for us to bill. Please speak with the office staff if you have concerns regarding the cost of services here.