

ABOUT CHIROPRACTIC

What is CHIROPRACTIC

Chiropractic is a health care discipline based on the scientific premise that the body is a self-regulating, self-healing organism. These important functions are controlled by the brain, spinal cord, and all the nerves of the body.

“Chiropractic” comes from the Greek word Chiropraktikos, meaning “done by hand.”

The practice of chiropractic focuses on the relationship between structure (primarily the spine, and pelvis) and function (as coordinated by the nervous system) and how that relationship affects the preservation and restoration of health.

The skull protects the delicate tissues of the brain. The moving bones of the spine protect the intricate communication pathways of the spinal cord and nerve roots. If these nervous system pathways are impaired, malfunction of the tissue and organ function throughout the body can result.

Chiropractic also places an emphasis on nutrition and exercise, wellness and healthy lifestyle modifications.



EDUCATION & TRAINING

What type of education do chiropractors receive?

Chiropractors are required to adhere to strict and extensive educational requirements and standards to become registered health professionals in Australia.

Australian chiropractors are five year university trained, and are government registered and government regulated health professionals.

To become a registered chiropractor in Australia you must have studied an accredited 5-year chiropractic program conducted at a University within Australia, or have completed an accredited program overseas that satisfies the requirements set by the Australian Chiropractic Regulating authority.



Healthy spine, healthier life

Currently there are four universities in Australia that have chiropractic degree programs:

- **RMIT University** in Melbourne (VIC) offers a Bachelor of Health Science (Chiropractic) – 3 year undergraduate program, followed by a Master of Clinical Chiropractic – 2 year post-graduate program.
- **Macquarie University** in Sydney (NSW) has a three year Bachelor of Chiropractic Science which provides the basis for entry into a two year Master of Chiropractic.
- **Murdoch University** in Perth (WA) offers a five year Bachelor of Chiropractic.
- **Central Queensland University** (Mackay) which offers a 3 year Bachelor of Science (Chiropractic) and a 2 year Master of Chiropractic Science.

Successful completion of the whole program of study is required for professional registration as a chiropractor. The Chiropractors' Association of Australia maintains an open line of communication with the four educational institutions running chiropractic degree programs. Members of the profession and the Association's chief executive attend course advisory committee meetings and regular discussions are held between the universities' academic staff and the CAA National Board.

A chiropractor's education never ends. After entering practice, all CAA chiropractors must complete continuing professional development courses and seminars to upgrade and improve their skills and to stay current on the latest scientific research.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do chiropractors do?

Chiropractors are the spinal health experts. Helping to restore proper spinal biomechanics and improved nervous system function begins with a patient's case history. This gives the chiropractor a background about your health, such as surgeries, accidents, the onset of your condition, and other details affecting your current health.

After reviewing your history and discussing your specific problem, a thorough orthopaedic, neurological, and chiropractic examination is performed. X-rays may be taken to uncover structural and functioning problems associated with the spinal column. These examinations help identify areas of spinal malfunction and resulting nervous system deficit.

The findings of these examinations are explained and a plan of chiropractic adjustments may be recommended. Progress is monitored with periodical examinations and follow-up reports.

How does chiropractic work?

Chiropractic works by helping to restore your own inborn ability to be healthy. When under the proper control of your nervous system, all the cells, tissue, and organs of your body are designed to function well and resist disease and ill health. The chiropractic approach to better health is to locate and help reduce interferences to your natural state of being healthy.



A common interference to the nervous system is the twenty four moving bones of the spinal column. A loss of normal motion or position of these bones can irritate or impair the function of the nervous system. This can disrupt the transmission of controlling nerve impulses.

Chiropractors aim to improve nervous system function primarily through chiropractic adjustments (with particular attention to the spine, skull and pelvis), to help remove any interference that may be impairing normal health.

How are chiropractors regulated?

Chiropractors are five year university trained, government regulated and government registered healthcare professionals. Australian Government has established a chiropractic regulating authority to ensure increased public safety for the Australian population. These bodies are responsible for maintaining the highest standards for all practitioners.

Is chiropractic care safe?

In the words of the New Zealand Government's Inquiry, chiropractic care is "remarkably safe."¹ Chiropractic has an excellent safety record. It is the result of a conservative approach to health that avoids invasive procedures or addictive drugs.

In relation to the treatment of neck and back pain, studies have shown that a course of chiropractic care was 250 times safer than a course of anti-inflammatory drugs².



What is a chiropractic adjustment?

A chiropractic adjustment is the skill of using a specific force in a precise direction, applied to a joint that is fixated, "locked up", or not moving properly. This adds motion to the joint, helping the joints to gradually regain more normal motion and function. The purpose of this safe and natural procedure is to permit improved spinal function, improved nervous system function, and improved health.

There are many ways to adjust the spine. Usually the chiropractor's hands or a specially designed instrument delivers a brief and highly-accurate thrust. Some adjusting methods are quick, whereas others require a slow, constant or indirect pressure.

After years of university training and clinical experience, each chiropractor becomes highly skilled in the delivery of a variety of adjusting approaches.

Is chiropractic care appropriate for children?

Since significant trauma can occur at birth, many parents choose



¹ *Chiropractic in New Zealand: Report of the Commission of Inquiry.* (1979). Hasselberg PD, Government Printer, Wellington, New Zealand.

² Dabbs, V., & Lauretti, W.J. (1995). A Risk Assessment of Cervical Manipulation vs NSAIDs for the Treatment of Neck Pain. *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, 18(8), 530-536

to have their newborns checked for any spinal health related problems. Later, learning to walk, riding a bicycle, and other childhood activities can cause spinal health related problems.

While a bandage and some comforting words can help a skinned knee, the potential underlying structural damage to the child's spine, skull, pelvis and extremities is the unique domain of a chiropractor.

Many childhood health complaints that are brushed off as "growing pains" may be able to be traced to the spine. Regular chiropractic checkups may be able to identify these problems and help avoid some of the health complaints seen later in adults. Naturally, Chiropractic adjusting procedures are modified to a child's spine, particularly babies.



Am I too old for chiropractic care?

More and more people are consulting chiropractic doctors, especially in their later years. With growing concerns about over-medication and the side effects of combining various prescription drugs, safe, natural chiropractic care is growing in popularity.

Restoring better spinal function can help improve mobility, vitality, endurance, and appetite. Many patients report improvements with arthritic symptoms and other chronic ailments often associated with the aging process. The adjusting technique used by your doctor will be modified for maximum comfort and results. As we get older and wiser, the simplicity and effectiveness of chiropractic care becomes more and more obvious.



For how long will I need chiropractic care?

Spinal problems, neglected since early childhood, may require ongoing supportive care for optimum spinal function. These long-standing problems are often associated with muscle weakness, soft tissue damage, and degenerative changes to the spine.

Most patients find that periodic chiropractic checkups help keep them in tip-top shape. Those who are active, have stressful jobs, or want to be their very best, find that a schedule of preventative visits are helpful in the maintenance of good health.

Some patients seek chiropractic care only when their ache or pain becomes unbearable. While this style of "crisis management" is usually more costly and time consuming, chiropractors stand ready to help all patients, regardless of their health goals. How long you decide to benefit from chiropractic care is always up to you.

Do chiropractic adjustments hurt?

In most cases, not at all. In fact most people find having an adjustment very relaxing.

With some adjustments you may sometimes feel or hear popping sound from the spinal joints. This is simply caused by a gas release from the joint as spinal movement is restored, such as when a wet glass is removed from a table.

Some Chiropractors use a hand held instrument to adjust the spine. Others use pelvic blocks to re-align the body. Special techniques are used for adjusting infants and children. Whatever the technique, Chiropractors use skill, not force or strength, to conduct a safe, effective adjustment.



What results can I expect?

If you're new to Chiropractic care, you'll want to know what type of result you can expect. Individual experience varies from person to person, but most people can expect some benefits soon after beginning care and for these to consolidate further as therapy continues. Statistically too, research shows that Chiropractic care is more effective and economical and also gives longer lasting results for disorders of the spine than other forms of health care.^{3 4 5}

The difference between Chiropractic and Physiotherapy?

In understanding the difference between Chiropractic and Physiotherapy, we recommend referring to the definition of each practice. Chiropractic is a health care discipline based on the scientific premise that the body is a self-regulating, self-healing organism. The practice of Chiropractic focuses on the relationship between structure (primarily the spine, and pelvis) and function (as coordinated by the nervous system) and how that relationship affects the preservation and restoration of health. Physiotherapy, as described by the Australian Physiotherapy Association, "uses a variety of techniques to help your muscles and joints work to their full potential. It can help repair damage by speeding up the healing process and reducing pain and stiffness.

Each individual is different and must make their own choice about the most appropriate method of care for them. We believe Chiropractic, with its central focus on the spine, nervous system and their impact on entire body provides a health care option that can help manage pain as well as assist in achieving optimal well-being.

³ Meade TW, Dyer S, Browne W, Townsend J, Frank AO. (1990) Low Back Pain of Mechanical Origin: Randomised Comparison of Chiropractic and Hospital Outpatient Treatment. *The British Medical Journal* 300: 1431-7

⁴ Manga P, Angus D et al (1993) The Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Chiropractic Management of Low Back Pain. Pran Manga and Associates, University of Ottawa, Canada.

⁵ Shekelle PG, Adams AH, Chassin MR et al. (1991) The Appropriateness of Spinal Manipulation for Low-Back Pain: Indications and Ratings by a Multidisciplinary Panel. Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corp, 1991

Approximately how much does a Chiropractic session cost?

Chiropractors have varying initial consultation fees, depending on the needs of the individual. Some may adjust on first visit, and some may not, or sometimes an x-ray may be taken. Generally first consults are approx. \$70-\$140 and regular visits around \$40 - \$60.

What should you bring with you and wear?

Most Chiropractors will take care of people in the clothes they come in with. However any bulky clothing, such as a heavy winter jacket or thick jumper would need to be removed. A small percentage of Chiropractors will require their clients to be gowned.

Do you need a referral from a GP?

Chiropractors are primary healthcare practitioners therefore a referral is not necessary. However more and more GP's are referring to Chiropractors via the Enhanced Primary Care Program (EPC).

For more information, please contact the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (National).

Phone: 1800 075 003
Fax: 02 4731 8088
Email: caa@caa.asn.au
www.chiropractors.asn.au

Follow the "healthy spine, healthier life" 6-point plan:

1. Watch your stress levels
2. Don't put unnecessary strain on your back
3. Improve your posture
4. Exercise regularly
5. Have a healthy diet
6. Keep a regular appointment with a chiropractor