

How a Chiropractor Can Help With Back Pain

Up to one in four adults in the United States has back pain each year. For many, chiropractic care can help.

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Almost all people will get relief from back pain within three months. But that can seem like a long time when you're in pain. Fortunately, there are many ways you can get help to ease pain. One of them is chiropractic care.

Chiropractic care: A hands-on approach

Chiropractic care focuses on the body's structure and the way it functions. It also explores how this relationship affects health.

People often seek chiropractic care for back and neck pain, headaches and other problems. But back pain is the most common reason for chiropractic visits.

Treatment for back pain often involves hands-on adjustments to the spine and other joints. The goal is to correct problems with alignment and help the body's natural ability to heal itself. Research is looking into how this approach to health care might help for back pain and other health conditions.

Chiropractors have extensive training. It includes four years of coursework and direct patient care. In the U.S., chiropractors must earn a doctorate. And most states require them to complete continuing education each year to maintain their licenses.

Making adjustments

Your chiropractor will likely ask you about your health history and perform a physical exam. He or she may take x-rays to plan the right treatment for you.

Spinal manipulation is one way that a chiropractor treats back pain. He or she applies sudden, controlled force - usually using his or her hands - to move a joint in the spine through its normal range of motion. The goal is to ease pain and improve function.

Research shows that spinal manipulation can provide moderate relief for low back pain. And at least one study showed it works as well as conventional treatments such as pain medicine, physical therapy and back exercises.

A chiropractor may combine back pain treatment with:

- Mobilization - a procedure in which he or she moves a joint within its usual range
- Electrical stimulation
- Heat and cold
- Rest
- Dietary supplements

Your chiropractor may also talk to you about lifestyle factors - such as exercise, diet and weight control - and how they may help ease your back pain.

Chiropractic treatments are generally safe when done by licensed practitioners. Serious side effects such as stroke or nerve damage are very rare. More common side effects may include headache, fatigue or discomfort in the treated area for a few days afterward.

If you're considering chiropractic care for back pain, talk with your doctor. And check your insurance plan to see which treatments are covered.

SOURCES:

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