

Chiropractic Adjustments

What is chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a complete system of healthcare focused on restoring, preserving, and optimizing health by natural hands-on care.

Where conventional or "allopathic" medicine focuses on curing illness through surgery and pharmaceuticals, the goal of chiropractic is to optimize health with a non-invasive approach that does not use drugs or surgery. Chiropractic's primary avenue of care is manipulation of the spine and the framework of the body.

The spine is an important structure that houses and provides protection for the spinal cord, while providing mobility for the upper body. This dual requirement of strength and flexibility makes the spine a very complex structure, with multiple joints at each spinal segment (the vertebrae) forming the spinal column.



When these joints (also known as articulations) are not positioned or functioning normally, it can affect the nerves exiting the spine. Chiropractic care attends to irritations along the spine by manually repositioning these joints. This is a chiropractic "adjustment."

The word "chiropractic" comes from the Greek words cheir (hand) and praxis (action), and simply means "done by hand." Note that the word "chiropractic," while a bit awkward, is the actual name of the profession. A chiropractor practices chiropractic (not chiropracy, chiropractics, or even chiropractic medicine).

Chiropractors are licensed professionals who are trained to diagnose and appropriately care for or refer patients for the care they require. Accordingly, they continually assess their patients from dual perspectives, asking: What might I do for you, as well as, what might you also need today beyond my abilities?

Chiropractic patients often visit their chiropractor periodically in order simply to relieve irritations - to get "adjusted." Individuals also seek chiropractic care for back pain, headaches, joint pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, sprains, as well as non-musculoskeletal conditions including allergies, asthma, and digestive disorders. Some chiropractors further specialize in orthopedics, sports injuries, neurology, pediatrics, nutrition, internal disorders, or diagnostic imaging.

What is the underlying philosophy?

Due to its focused hands-on attention to the spine, the profession is often thought of by its tools and by its avenue of care. Chiropractic, however, is not just about manual care of the spine, although it has certainly built a reputation caring for that often troublesome piece of anatomy. In chiropractic, care of the spine and nervous system (which is of fundamental importance in human health) is the way to optimize the health of the whole human system and not just a means to relieve back complaints.

A basic philosophy of chiropractic is that **the body naturally seeks the proper balance** among all the systems of the body, and that these systems are meant to work together. A second basic principle is that **proper structure is necessary for proper function**. If a structure is impaired by injury or stress, its function can be adversely affected.



For example, when our spine (structure) is not positioned normally, it can irritate the nerves exiting the spine. And when spinal nerves are irritated, they don't function normally and can affect the function of the tissues they interact with. This "end-organ" effect is the central interest in chiropractic care. The relief of localized discomfort at the point of irritation is also an objective of care.

Thus chiropractic focuses on the integrity of the spine and its surrounding tissues as a means to enhance normal human function and health.

In Addition to nerve pressure reduction other tissue related problems are helped with a chiropractic adjustment:

- **Hyperemia.**² Referring to an excess of blood in a specific area of the body, hyperemia may develop when there is an obstruction preventing the blood from flowing normally.
- **Congestion.**² Joint dysfunction affects the muscles in different ways, with some muscles developing trigger points, or areas of congestion, where toxins develop, irritate the nerve endings within the muscle, and produce pain.
- **Edema.**² When the body's tiny blood vessels (capillaries) are damaged or pressurized, excess fluid may leak from them and build up in the tissues, leading to a swelling known as edema.

- **Minute hemorrhages.**² Referring to a small amount of bleeding or an abnormal flow of blood, minute hemorrhages may develop within the body's blood vessels as a result of certain triggers, underlying conditions and other risk factors.
- **Fibrosis.**² Detailing the replacement of normal tissue with scar tissue, fibrosis commonly occurs in people dealing with recurrent back pain.
- **Local ischemia.**² A very specific type of muscle pain, ischemia refers to a lack of blood flow in the muscle (often from a muscle spasm), leaving the muscle very painful to touch.
- **Atrophy.**² With muscle atrophy, the muscle shrinks and may partially or completely waste away as a result of inactivity or various diseases and conditions.
- **Tissue rigidity.**² Eventual rigidity and adhesions form not only in joint capsules, but also in ligaments, tendons and muscles themselves.

[References:](#)

Jaskoviac PA, Schafer RC. Applied Physiotherapy: Practical Clinical Applications with Emphasis on the Management of Pain and Related Syndromes. ACA Press, Arlington, Virginia, 1986. Expert Contributor [Larry Kuusisto, PhD, DC](#)

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