



# About Chiropractic

Chiropractic is a health care profession that focuses on disorders of the musculoskeletal and nervous systems, and the effects of these disorders on general health. Doctors of chiropractic—often referred to as DCs, chiropractors or chiropractic physicians—practice a drug-free, hands-on approach to health care that includes patient examination, diagnosis and treatment. In addition to their expertise in spinal manipulation/adjustment, doctors of chiropractic have broad diagnostic skills and are also trained to recommend therapeutic and rehabilitative exercises, as well as to provide nutritional, dietary and lifestyle advice.

## What conditions do chiropractors treat?

Doctors of chiropractic care for patients of all ages, with a variety of health conditions. DCs are especially well known for their expertise in caring for patients with back pain, neck pain and headaches with their highly skilled manipulations, or chiropractic adjustments. They also care for patients with a wide range of injuries and disorders of the musculoskeletal system, involving the muscles, ligaments and joints. These painful conditions often involve or impact the nervous system, which can cause referred pain and dysfunction distant to the region of injury. The benefits of chiropractic care extend to general health issues as well, since our body structure affects our overall

function. DCs also advise patients on diet, nutrition, exercise, healthy habits, and occupational and lifestyle modification.

## How is a chiropractic adjustment performed?

A chiropractic adjustment or manipulation is a manual procedure that utilizes the highly refined skills developed during the doctor of chiropractic's intensive years of education. The chiropractic physician typically uses their hands—or an instrument—to manipulate the joints of the body, particularly the spine, in order to restore or enhance joint function. This often helps resolve joint inflammation and reduces the patient's pain. Chiropractic manipulation is a highly controlled procedure that rarely causes discomfort. The chiropractor adapts the procedure to meet the specific needs of each patient. Patients often note positive changes in their symptoms immediately following treatment.

## Why is there a popping sound when a joint is adjusted?

Adjustment (or manipulation) of a joint may result in the release of a gas bubble between the joints, which makes a popping sound. The same thing occurs when you “crack” your knuckles. The noise is caused by the change of pressure within the joint. There is usually minimal, if any, discomfort involved.

## What does research tell us?

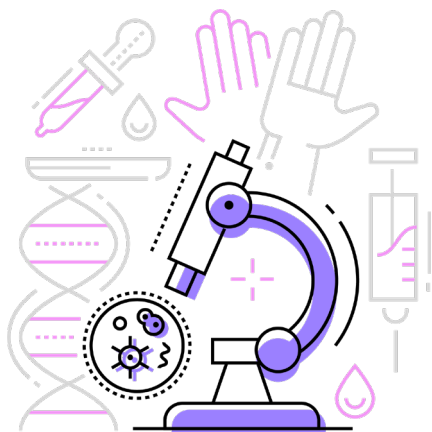
A growing list of research studies and reviews demonstrates that the services provided by chiropractic physicians are both safe and effective. The evidence strongly supports the natural, whole-body and cost-effective approach of chiropractic care for a variety of conditions. To read excerpts from relevant studies, visit [www.HandsDownBetter.org/research](http://www.HandsDownBetter.org/research).

## What type of education do chiropractors receive?

Doctors of chiropractic—who are licensed to practice in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and in many nations around the world—undergo a rigorous education in the sciences and health care, similar to that of medical doctors. Because of the hands-on nature of chiropractic care, and the intricate adjusting techniques, a significant portion of time is spent in clinical training. The course of study is approved by an accrediting agency that is fully recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. This has been the case for more than 50 years.



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Before they are allowed to practice, doctors of chiropractic must also pass national board examinations and become state licensed. This extensive education prepares them to diagnose health care problems, treat the problems when they are within their scope of practice, and refer patients to other healthcare practitioners when appropriate. To learn more about how chiropractic education compares to medical education, visit [www.HandsDownBetter.org](http://www.HandsDownBetter.org).

## Is chiropractic treatment appropriate for children?

Children can benefit from chiropractic care. Children are very physically active and experience many types of falls and blows from activities of daily living, as well as from participating in sports. Injuries such as these may cause many symptoms, including back and neck pain, stiffness, soreness or discomfort. Chiropractic care is always adapted to the individual patient. It is a highly skilled treatment, and in the case of children, very gentle.

## Are the services provided by doctors of chiropractic safe?

Chiropractic is widely recognized as one of the safest drug-free, noninvasive therapies available for the treatment of neuromusculoskeletal complaints. Although chiropractic has an excellent safety record, no health treatment is completely free of potential adverse effects. The risks associated with chiropractic, however, are very small. Many patients feel immediate relief following chiropractic treatment, but some may experience mild soreness or aching, just as they do after some forms of exercise. Current literature shows that minor discomfort or soreness following spinal manipulation typically fades within 24 hours.

## Is chiropractic treatment ongoing?

The hands-on nature of the chiropractic treatment is essentially what requires patients to visit the chiropractor a number of times. To be treated by a chiropractor, a patient needs to be in their office. In contrast, a course of treatment from medical doctors often involves a pre-established plan that is conducted at home (i.e. taking a course of antibiotics once a day for a couple of weeks). A chiropractor may provide acute, chronic, and/or preventive care, thus making a certain number of visits sometimes necessary. Your doctor of chiropractic should tell you ahead of time the extent of treatment recommended and how long you can expect it to last.

For more information on chiropractic as well as prevention and wellness topics, or to find a doctor of chiropractic near you, visit [www.HandsDownBetter.org](http://www.HandsDownBetter.org).