



Chiropractic Corner

Have You Thought About Chiropractic?

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The 'Bad' News

It is generally accepted that 80 per cent of people experience at least one episode of significant back pain during their lives. The 'good' news – Chiropractic care has been shown in research to be effective and cost-effective as well as having a high level of patient satisfaction.

So what to do?

Chances are, many of you who are reading this have experienced, or are experiencing lower back pain. Sometimes you can also have leg pain (referred to as "sciatica") which refers down to the calf, ankle or foot.

Research also reports that at least 85-90 per cent of lower back pain cases are termed 'mechanical'. This means it is caused by the joints of your back (the spine) moving improperly (aberrant motion) or not at all (hypomobilities). Another factor can be muscle weaknesses or imbalances.

Can my muscles cause lower back pain?

Yes – as an example, weak abdominal muscles can cause the posture of your lower back to become more lordotic (often referred to as a "sway back") which places more strain on the joints of the spine (called 'fac-

ets'). This can lead to the joints moving improperly or becoming restricted in movement which can result in mechanical type lower back pain.

Other sources of lower back pain can include the discs, nerves, joint capsule (ligaments around the joint), arthritis or degenerative changes.

What can I do?

First and foremost, is to have your lower back examined to determine the potential causes of your condition. Canada's 6,500 chiropractors evaluate back pain on a daily basis and have long been considered the most qualified of all health care professionals in the field of spinal manipulation. This issue has been dealt with in the literature over the years including over 30 years ago by the New Zealand Commission of Inquiry into Chiropractic (1979). This concluded that "Chiropractors carry out spinal diagnosis and therapy at a very sophisticated and refined level. They are the only health practitioners who are necessarily equipped by their education and training to carry out manual therapy".

Although you do not require a medical referral to consult with a chiropractor, there area an increasing number of family physi-

cian's (your 'GPs') who refer to chiropractors on a regular basis. However you may require a referral for the purpose of reimbursement through your private health insurance plan.

In addition to your 'GP', you should also check with your family, friends and coworkers as there are likely a number of them who are chiropractic patients.

What will a chiropractor do?

A chiropractor will review the history of your lower back pain, examine the area, decide if imaging studies are necessary (ie. x-rays), and decide if further investigations are necessary. Once all the information has been gathered, your chiropractor will explain the factors contributing to your problem, what the problem is (ie. diagnosis or clinical impression) and appropriate recommendations. These recommendations may include:

- * Chiropractic treatment (spinal adjustments, soft tissue therapy techniques and at times modalities such as ultrasound or muscle stimulation.
- * Rehabilitative exercises (ie. core stabilization exercises).
- * Lifestyle and activity modifications.
- * Ergonomic revisions at your desk or computer (whether it be work or at home).

What should I expect?

Your response to treatment will depend on your particular case and would be discussed with you by your chiropractor.

It will also be very important for you to follow all the chiropractor's recommendations. Just like you have to floss, brush and rinse between dental appointments to maintain good dental health, you also have to do the exercises that are prescribed to you, in order to strengthen your back and increase your flexibility.

How can I get more information?

Check out the website at the Halifax Chiropractic Clinic (www.halifaxchiropractic.ca) or the website of the Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors (www.chiropractors.ns.ca)

The national chiropractic association (Canadian Chiropractic Association) also has a website (www.chiropracticcanada.ca)

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