

The Wellness Express



Jump on the train to good health

Issue 1, August 2010

To Adjust, or Not to Adjust

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Chiropractic is a scientifically proven treatment used to decrease pain, increase function and improve healing for a number of illnesses and ailments. This is mainly due to the fact that the removal of spinal subluxations has a positive influence on the nervous system - this maximizes brain-body communication.

Even though the safety record of chiropractic is well-established, there are certain cases where the chiropractic adjustment is not recommended. Many conditions treatable with chiropractic care can mimic other conditions that don't warrant a chiropractic adjustment.

How does a chiropractor know the difference? Through excellent training and education, your chiropractor will be able to tell in most cases, but at other times he or she will need your help.

The main reason to avoid an adjustment to any area is joint instability. Many different conditions can create this problem. Below is a list of these conditions. If you think you might have any of the following, let your chiropractor know. In some cases, less treatment can be more beneficial for you long term.

1. Joint issues: where there is likely to be instability of the joint because of ligamentous laxity

Some chronic inflammatory conditions may create joint instability by creating *ligamentous laxity* (loose ligaments). The most common example of this is rheumatoid arthritis (RA). This is an arthritic condition that affects both sides of the body symmetrically, and when a person is having an acute attack, the joints become red, swollen and warm. Although RA usually affects the smaller joints of the hands and feet, it can also affect one of the ligaments of the neck, making upper cervical adjustments unsuitable. In the early stages, this condition mimics a number of joint problems. But in later stages, RA symptoms are quite easy to diagnose.

Another more obvious joint condition that should preclude a chiropractic adjustment is acute trauma where a suspected bone fracture or joint sprain is likely. Tell your chiropractor about any acute sprains or strains you have suffered.

Exercise of the Week

Hamstring Stretch

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

Start: Standing in front of a chair.

Exercise: Place one foot up on chair, with leg straight. Slowly bend forward, reaching toward foot. Stop and hold when you feel a light pull behind leg. Hold for 30-60 seconds, relaxing muscles of upper leg. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



2. Bone issues: conditions where there is weakening of the bone, making an adjustment more likely to create additional damage, or possibly causing the spread of infection or malignancy

Any condition that causes a decreased bone density may pose an increased risk for fracture when your chiropractor attempts to move the joint associated with that bone. Some conditions that cause decreased bone density include osteoporosis, bone cancer or infection.

Another condition that often affects the bone, causing instability of a spinal segment, is spondylolisthesis. This can be caused by a fracture of a vertebra or degeneration of the vertebra caused by mechanical stress. When either of these things occurs, one vertebra will slip forward relative to the one below, causing the joints at this level to be prone to instability.

If your chiropractor feels you are at risk for any of these conditions, you may be referred for special imaging studies before receiving your first adjustment.

3. Neurological symptoms – most often a chiropractic adjustment is exactly what you need to decrease your pain and nerve irritation. However, there are certain neurological conditions where an adjustment could aggravate or exacerbate a pre-existing condition.

One of the most serious of these conditions is called cauda equina syndrome. This problem is often caused by a large herniated disc in your lower lumbar spine – one which can impinge on the nerves connected to the bladder and bowel. If you experience this condition, you may not be able to sense the need to urinate or defecate.

This could lead to a life-threatening rupture of the bladder or bowel. Always mention to your doctor when a case of low back pain or sciatica includes these symptoms, or if you have general numbness in the gluteal region.

4. Circulatory issues: where adjusting the neck could precipitate a cerebrovascular event, or adjustments to thoracic or lumbar areas may potentially affect an existing abdominal aneurysm

Although the risk of stroke with a chiropractic adjustment is rare, there are pre-existing conditions that make it prudent for your chiropractor to avoid adjusting your neck. The most obvious of these factors is when a person has already experienced a stroke. Other factors, when combined, increase the risk of stroke significantly. These include: family history of stroke, obesity, cigarette smoking, or taking oral birth control.



As mentioned previously, the benefits of chiropractic far outweigh the risks. However, you must tell your chiropractor everything you know about your health so you can work together to maximize the benefits of chiropractic.



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Quote of the Week

“Most of the shadows of this life are caused by our standing in our own sunshine.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



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This newsletter is written and designed by Mediadoc™ exclusively for its chiropractic clients.

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