

# Chiropractic

- Chiropractors are primary health care professionals, specialising in the diagnosis, treatment and overall management of conditions of the joints, ligaments, tendons and nerves of the body, particularly those of the spine.
- Working on all joints of the body, but concentrating particularly on the spine, they use their hands to make specific, often gentle, adjustments designed to improve the function of the joints thus helping to relieve pain, muscle spasm and increasing the range of movement in a joint.
- Chiropractic is regulated by law, the government appointed regulator being the General Chiropractic Council (GCC). It is against the law for anyone to practice as a chiropractor if they are not on the GCC register.
- Back pain is one of the most common conditions for which people consult a chiropractor.
- Chiropractors take a holistic approach to their patients and chiropractic treatment does not involve the use of any drugs or surgery.

## **What form does treatment take?**

Chiropractors are fully trained in diagnosis and the first session is spent mainly in finding the cause of your problem, a case history will be taken along with a general and physical examination. Many chiropractors are trained to take and interpret x-rays and x-ray can be a valuable diagnostic technique. The chiropractor may also recommend other tests in order to aid diagnosis. The chiropractor will also check for signs of any serious underlying disorder for which you would need to be referred to your GP or hospital. Chiropractors use various different manipulative techniques and other treatment types depending on the individual patient's needs. Chiropractors also provide advice and assistance in rehabilitation to help prevent problems from re-occurring. Chiropractic 'adjustments' to the spinal joints help to release them and regain normal function and movement. Don't worry if you hear a clicking or popping noise when one of your joints is being adjusted – this is perfectly normal and is simply tiny gas bubbles of nitrogen being formed in the liquid between the joints. After treatment you may feel more energetic. However, some people feel a temporary increase in discomfort, stiffness or tiredness for a day or so. Chiropractic is suitable for people of all ages.

## **What is the evidence?**

A good deal of clinical research has been carried out into the effectiveness of traditional chiropractic in treating back pain. On balance, it would seem that chiropractic can be effective in treating low back pain of recent origin and may be of help with chronic low back pain.

A survey of BackCare members, who are more likely than average to suffer from chronic back pain, showed that 33% felt that chiropractic treatment had provided benefit that lasted 6 months or more, and a further 38% found it helpful in short-term relief.

## **What back conditions is it most likely to help?**

Acute back pain (i.e. pain that has been present for less than six weeks); muscle strains and spasms; chronic back pain and postural conditions.

### **What back conditions are less likely to improve?**

Back pain derived principally from conditions such as spinal stenosis and osteoporosis where pain is unlikely to improve and chiropractic should be avoided; also extreme cases of prolapsed intervertebral discs.

### **What back conditions should not be treated by chiropractic?**

- Chiropractic adjustments, in common with other manipulative therapies, should not be used if you have severe osteoporosis or malignant spinal disease.
- It is not advised for people with blood conditions (such as leukaemia) or those taking warfarin or other anti-coagulants.

### **Regulator**

General Chiropractic Council  
44 Wicklow Street  
London  
WC1X 9HL  
Tel: 020 7713 5155  
Email: [enquiries@gcc-uk.org](mailto:enquiries@gcc-uk.org)  
Website: [www.gcc-org.uk](http://www.gcc-org.uk)

### **Associations**

British Chiropractic Association  
59 Castle Street  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG1 7SN  
Tel: 0118 950 5950  
Email: [enquiries@chiropractic-uk.org](mailto:enquiries@chiropractic-uk.org)  
Website: [www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk](http://www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk)

Scottish Chiropractic Association  
Laigh Hatton Farm  
Old Greenock Road  
Bishopton  
Renfrewshire  
PA7 5PB  
Tel: 0141 404 0260  
E-Mail: [admin@sca-chiropractic.org](mailto:admin@sca-chiropractic.org)  
Website: [www.sca-chiropractic.org](http://www.sca-chiropractic.org)

United Chiropractic Association  
17 Fore Street  
Ivybridge  
PL21 9AB  
Tel: 01752-896-223  
Website: [www.united-chiropractic.org](http://www.united-chiropractic.org)

### **Qualifications**

Chiropractic is a statutorily self-regulated profession – that is, chiropractors, like doctors and dentists, must be registered with the government appointed regulator, the General Chiropractic Council (GCC). It is illegal to practise as a chiropractor without being registered with the GCC. In order to achieve registration, practitioners must graduate with either a Bachelors or Masters degree in Chiropractic and the names of the degrees may vary depending on the awarding University. Registration with the regulator means that the individual has a properly approved chiropractic qualification, current professional indemnity insurance and is subject to the GCC professional code of practice and standard of proficiency.

### **Relevant Information**

- BackCare Factsheet - The Difference between Chiropractic and Osteopathy, Osteopathy
- BackCare Booklets – Basic Back Care, Managing Back Pain
- Other Publications – “Living with Back Pain” by Parker & Main, available from BackCare

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