

unitynews

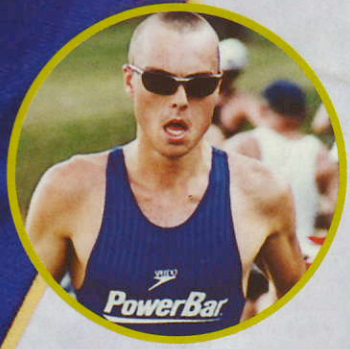


HEALTH AND THE NET

CHIROPRACTIC
It may be the answer for you

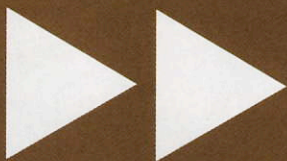
WIN A GREAT HOLIDAY

30% REBATE UNDER ATTACK



OUR FUTURE OLYMPIANS





Tired of begging for massages or taking headache pills for your back pain? Chiropractic treatment could be the relief you need.

is chiropractic for you?

Did you know that chronic back pain can upset your digestion, sleep cycle, eyesight and depth of breathing? Blame it on your spine – which acts like a computer network for the body. “The spine acts as a conduit for the nervous system, sending messages to the organs, muscles and brain,” explains Phillip Ebrall, Senior Lecturer in Chiropractic at Victoria’s RMIT University.

When the vertebrae in your spine are out of balance, the result is a little like a computer with a disc drive fault – the information from the nerves becomes confused. Over time, motion is restricted, which leads to changes in gait, spatial awareness, posture and balance. It can also kickstart back muscle inflammation which then alters or confuses messages from the nerves.

“When we treat the spine we create neuromuscular balance by easing pressure on the muscles, which then relieves inflammation and restores proper nerve functioning,” says Ebrall.

Chiropractors believe that these problems often begin in childhood due to falls, the process of learning to walk or birth trauma. They call this the ‘Vertebral Subluxation Complex’ and it often involves

pain referred from one area of the back to another. For example, some patients who suffer headaches have lower back pain caused by problems at the base of the skull. Others may be experiencing numbness and tingling in their fingers, but, in fact, the neck needs treatment.

TREATMENT BENEFITS

Most people are good candidates for chiropractic healing, but it is not recommended for people with fractures.

Surprisingly, people with osteoporosis (a condition which makes the bones brittle) often report benefits.

Chiropractic can do wonders for people with whiplash or headaches, work injuries from lifting or repetitive strain, and pregnant women or new mothers with acute back pain. “I’ve even had a patient with MS who has reported being able to walk with greater ease due to chiropractic treatment,” says chiropractor Joe Ierano, Vice President of the Chiropractors’ Association of Australia. “But one of our greatest success areas is with children – particularly babies who have poor sleep patterns, reflux or no appetite, which can all be caused by spinal problems. Last week I adjusted a baby who was waking

every four hours, and that night the child slept from 5pm to 6am for the first time.”

Keen to give it a try? Allow more than an hour, because your chiropractor will take your full case history and conduct a thorough physical exam. X-rays are also taken to uncover structural problems in the spinal column and discount underlying medical conditions such as joint problems or cancer. “On examining an X-ray, chiropractors can immediately recognise postural problems, wear and tear and areas of abnormal anatomy (which they may want to focus on or may need to avoid),” Ierano explains.

A plan of chiropractic adjustments may then be recommended. Subsequent visits usually last from 10 to 20 minutes and between seven and 10 treatments may be needed.

Contrary to popular myth, chiropractors do not crack your joints so hard that you feel like they will break your neck or snap your limbs. In fact, your problem may require only gentle adjustment.

LOW LEVEL OF FORCE

“The bulk of adjustments involve a low level of force directed into just one joint at a time, using the hands or a tiny



spring-loaded instrument," says Ierano. "The aim is to create a shift in joints that are locked so they regain flexibility. Some chiropractors also employ massage and ultrasound. Most utilise a range of techniques."

Does it hurt? Not usually. If the area is very inflamed and already sore you will experience some discomfort, but 99 per cent of patients don't feel any worsening of their pain. "For the first 48 hours after the treatment, you might have a slight headache or a little tenderness in the area treated," Ierano explains.

"On the other hand, some patients have no tenderness and feel instant improvement. Generally, however, the response occurs over a few weeks and then the effects endure. For example, after a month of treatment, a person who suffered three headaches a week may find they only experience one headache a month."

Sound unbelievable? That's what the medical profession used to think until countless studies proved the many benefits of chiropractic healing. "These studies have recorded not only the benefits but also the safety," points out

Ierano. "When practised by a qualified chiropractor, the technique has been shown to be 100 times safer than anti-inflammatory drugs and thousands of times safer than neck surgery."

CHECK FOR REGISTRATION

You don't need a doctor's referral to see a chiropractor, so how do you ensure you get the best? "First up, check that they are registered with the Chiropractors' Association of Australia, which has a code of ethics and sets high professional standards," says Ebrall.

Since 1978, chiropractic has been a registered profession in Australia, and practitioners must hold current registration with a Chiropractors' Registration Board in their State or Territory. "Another safeguard is to make sure the practitioner has qualifications from an Australian university or a DC degree from an American chiropractic college. Chiropractors are highly educated professionals who study at university. Their five-year training involves anatomy, physiology, pathology, neurology, spinal-adjusting techniques and X-ray assessment," says Ebrall.

In short, if you've stayed away from this

highly effective treatment for fear it could cause long-term loosening or damage to your joints, your fears are unfounded. Some patients need only one course of treatment, while chronic problems may benefit from ongoing maintenance for several years. Regardless, correcting the position and motion of the spine is an effective insurance policy against long-term wear and tear. It is a simple, drug-free way to ensure your joints and your nervous system work as efficiently as possible.

For more information, or to access a chiropractor near you, contact the Chiropractors' Association of Australia on 1800 075 003 or visit their website at www.chiropractors.asn.au.

CHIROPRACTIC BENEFITS

Manchester Unity pays \$35 for an initial consultation and \$22 for each subsequent consultation (\$40 and \$30 respectively for members on Super Hospital with Super Extras). We also pay up to \$70 (\$80) per year for X-rays by your chiropractor. Yearly limits (which include Osteopathy services) range from \$330 to \$350 depending on your level of cover.