

# ***Chiropractic***

**An information sheet from the Kentucky Council Against Health Fraud  
www.kcahf.org**

## **Overview**

*Chiropractic* is a health care profession in which practitioners use their hands to produce short forceful movements of the vertebrae in the spine (called *adjustments*). Usually this is done to treat back pain, sports injuries, and other problems of the bones and muscles. However, some chiropractors claim that their treatments can help with many other diseases and problems in the rest of the body. They may recommend regular chiropractic checkups to help your body keep healthy. They may use other forms of physical therapy, and even other types of therapy such as acupuncture and homeopathy. Many chiropractors sell dietary supplements.

Although there are many people who feel that they have been helped by chiropractors, there is little evidence that chiropractic is good for anything except possibly back pain. In addition, many chiropractors use methods that are unscientific. Some of them give unsound recommendations to avoid immunizations.

## **Scientific assessment**

There is some evidence that *spinal manipulation therapy* may be useful for back pain and possibly some other types of pain. However, it is not clear that this needs to be provided by chiropractors; physical therapists may be able to provide the same type of relief.

Most chiropractors believe that they are correcting something called a “subluxation,” which interferes with the actions of nerves. However, there is no scientific evidence for the chiropractic subluxation (and chiropractors cannot even agree on how to define it). Two chiropractors examining the same patient will not agree on where the subluxations are. Chiropractic subluxations cannot be demonstrated by x-rays.

There is no evidence that chiropractic adjustments affect the ability of nerves to work, or have any effects on organs elsewhere in the body, or have the ability to treat or prevent any disease.

Many conditions will improve on their own with time, so if patients feel better after seeing a chiropractor it does not mean that the chiropractic treatment was responsible.

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For further information, see many articles at these two web sites:

<http://www.quackwatch.org>

<http://www.chirobase.org>

## **Recommendations**

In general we do not recommend chiropractic because it is associated with many unscientific ideas and practices. However, if you do wish to see a chiropractor, we recommend the following guidelines:

- First see your physician to diagnose your condition, and then ask him or her to recommend a chiropractor who follows scientific practices.
- See a chiropractor only for problems with the back and possibly some other problems of the bones and muscles. Avoid chiropractors who show charts showing connections of the vertebrae to all of the organs of the body and claim that they can deal with diseases in these organs.
- Avoid chiropractors who diagnose and treat “subluxations.”
- Avoid chiropractors who routinely perform x-ray examinations.
- Avoid chiropractors who recommend that you get regular preventive or “maintenance” treatments.
- Avoid chiropractors who try to sell you dietary supplements, herbs, homeopathic remedies, etc.
- Do not receive treatments involving rapid rotation of the neck. Some patients have suffered strokes after such treatments. Although this is quite rare, there is no benefit of the treatment that justifies the risk.
- Avoid chiropractors who use unscientific methods of diagnosis, such as devices to measure heat along your spine, electrical measurements at various places on your skin, iridology, live cell analysis, applied kinesiology, etc. (See our separate handout on some of these.)
- Do not seek chiropractic care for infants and children.

For more information, see “Tips on Choosing a Chiropractor” and “What a Rational Chiropractor Can Do For You”

<http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/chirochoose.html>

<http://www.chirobase.org/07Strategy/goodchiro.html>

**Recommendations of KCAHF are based on our assessments of the scientific literature concerning unconventional approaches to health care. For specific recommendations concerning your medical condition, consult your physician.**

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