

## **Chiropractic Care and Children: Setting Your Child on a Path to Life Long Wellness**

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There are many benefits of a healthy spine for growing children and they are not limited to back pain issues. However, there are many misconceptions about chiropractic care in general and specifically for children. Core myths which are pervasive and colour many parents choices of whether or not to take their child for chiropractic care, which as was recently discussed in Canadian Chiropractor magazine, need to be addressed.

### **Myth #1**

#### **“Chiropractic care for children is new”**

The modern practice does have its roots in the 1980's but going all the way back to the founder of chiropractic in 1910, D.D Palmer indicated that it is important to check a child's spine from birth as birth its self can be traumatic and as a child grows it is important to gently correct spinal issues. In 1986, a non-profit association was created for chiropractors to share resources and to learn more about pediatric specific adjusting. The association now has more than 4,000 active members and many DC's are studying to become pediatric chiropractors

### **Myth #2**

#### **“Children don't need chiropractic care”**

Birth can be quite traumatic. Issues in the birthing process can put considerable strain on the baby's spine and skull, leading to many imbalances. As young as one week of age a child may be observed favoring, turning their head consistently one way versus the other, which indicates the beginning of an irregular curve. Any asymmetry of the muscles and spine can later in life evolve into a more serious condition or allow one side to become weaker and more prone to injury. Postural and joint issues are also easier to address earlier. Children also will have symptoms which on their own are often treated as an issue but in chiropractic care are observed as signs of a misalignment. The chiropractor does not per-ce treat the ADHD, ear infections or colic, but removes the interference of the nervous system to allow their body to “interpret the world around them properly,” thereby removing the symptoms. Chiropractic care is based on the belief that a healthy body can heal itself. Therefore if there is dysfunction ( read: an issue with the normal function) in the body, it is as simple in many cases as taking away the dysfunction to allow the body to heal itself.

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### Myth #3

#### **“Chiropractors use the same techniques on children as on adults, and therefore unsafe”**

The pressure and techniques used on adults are suitable for the situation they are being used in. Treating children requires very little pressure by comparison and is often more about mobilization into a neutral position, holding that position and allowing it to reset itself. Children's spines are mostly cartilaginous which reacts very differently than solid bone so alignments are treated very differently. By using the correct amount of force, the adjustments are actually very safe and provide the child with the groundwork for future health.

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### Children and Scoliosis

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Scoliosis by definition is 'an appreciable lateral deviation in the normally straight vertical line of the spine'. What this means is the spine should have a perfectly straight line up and down the back which is visible when you stand behind your child. If you see a bend in that line along the spine it may indicate a sideways shift of the spine. Infantile scoliosis occurs between birth and 3 years of age. This form is more common in boys and can show up as a left curve in the mid back. Juvenile scoliosis occurs between the ages of 3 and 10. Adolescent scoliosis occurs after the age of 10 and daughters at this time are more likely to develop this than sons.

Scoliosis is classified into 2 main groups. Nonstructural scoliosis can occur as a result of posture problems, hip and leg length irregularities, pain, nerve root irritation and disc problems as examples. In other words non-structural scoliosis occurs in the spine as a result of something else happening in the body. Structural scoliosis is a direct result of something going wrong with the spine. This can range from improperly developed spinal vertebrae to tumors within the spine. Early detection, diagnosis and treatment of scoliosis is extremely important for your child's health. If you notice that your child's posture is not lining up properly, i.e. the pelvis is not level, the shoulders are not level and the spine is not straight then further examination is warranted.

#### **Why is this important?**

Your spine has 2 main jobs to do. 1) Provide upright position and anchor all the back muscles for movement. 2) Protect the spinal cord and allow the nerves to exit the spine with no pressure or interference. A properly functioning spine allows the body to work at optimal health. Changes in the curvature of the spine can cause nerve compression and decrease nerve signals to the organs resulting in symptoms.

References: -

Dorland's Medical Dictionary- 27<sup>th</sup> Edition

Essentials of Skeletal Radiology - Yokum & Rowe, pgs 225-42

Stefan Dubowski, "Five Myths about care for Children", *Canadian Chiropractor*, May 2015.

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