

How to Choose a Chiropractor

By Dave Hoffman

Chiropractic medicine is a drug free, non-surgical healthcare field designed to optimize health based on the idea that a properly functioning nervous system will enable your body's naturally restorative inclinations. Chiropractors treat the central nervous system, which, through the brain and spinal chord, transmits signals that control all bodily functions.

By relieving pressure from the spine, chiropractors remove any interference with your body's ability to self heal and function normally.

Chiropractic medicine is considered to be the third largest healing profession and it is estimated that more than 20 million adults receive chiropractic care.

Chiropractors specialize in the structure and function of the spine and joints.

According to the Association of Chiropractic Colleges, the nervous system is integrated throughout the totality of human functioning, and therefore direct access chiropractic care can be integral to everyone's healthcare regimen.

Chiropractic care can include: diagnosis, which includes determining whether or not chiropractic care is indicated, and what kind of treatment is appropriate; case management, which involves chiropractic treatment, or referral to an appropriate healthcare provider when needed; and health education. The most well known chiropractic work is spine realignment. People often visit chiropractors for traumatic injuries such as whiplash and car accidents, but treatment is also appropriate for more minor aches, pains, and indications of illness.

Where to start?

Choosing the right chiropractor is like choosing any other kind of doctor. It is best to take time and research until you feel comfortable with your choice. Talk to friends, family members, and co-workers who have been satisfied with their chiropractic treatment. You can also ask your medical doctor for a referral.

Some chiropractic clinics will offer free consultations and free screenings, as well as pre-treatment lectures to learn more about what chiropractic care is about and the particular doctor.

Professional chiropractors, or Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) receive licensing through an exam administered by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners. A minimum of six to seven years of college and post-graduate studies, including 4,200 hours of coursework and field experience.

Consideration should be given to technique, expertise, and specialty as well as more personal considerations such as personality, style of communication, and philosophical approach.

The initial phone call

The most important consideration is to find a DC you feel comfortable with. Your first contact with your chiropractor will likely be by phone. Don't be afraid to ask any questions that concern you. Some factors you may consider include: How many years

experience does he have? Where is the clinic located? What are the office hours? How long are the sessions? What is the cost? How often are treatments? What procedures will be used in treatment? Do they have a referral base?

Since chiropractors treat a myriad of conditions, be sure to inquire about whether he or she has any specialties, which may include work related injuries, sports, or working with children.

What to expect?

A good chiropractor, as any other doctor will listen to you and work to meet your health goals and treatment needs.

During your first visit, your chiropractor will ask you questions about your family history, diet, occupation, and prior treatment. The chiropractor will perform a physical exam. He will conduct a spinal examination to check for any structural abnormalities that may be causing problems. In some cases, you will be recommended for lab tests and X-rays.

The DC begins care by administering specific spinal adjustment manipulative treatment. Be aware that a responsible chiropractor will refer you to a medical specialist if his treatment isn't appropriate. If the DC determines that chiropractic treatment is needed, he should explain everything completely.

Another thing to be aware of is that chiropractic treatment is meant to address health problems. Maintenance or wellness visits are not considered necessary. Be wary if a chiropractor recommends treatments when there is no pain or illness involved. According to an article on www.chiroweb.com, chiropractors should not treat you for poor posture if there is no pain, instead suggesting a workout program or exercise program or a referral to a gym. Muscle weakness is another red flag. Muscle weakness due to being out of shape generally requires a referral for exercise. Muscle weakness due to serious problems requires a second opinion by a neurologist or orthopedist.

Never be afraid to ask for a second opinion.