



Chiropractic and Children

More and more parents are seeking chiropractic care for their children. From infants to teenagers, parents are realizing the benefits that spinal adjustments are having on their children's well being.

The central nervous system is the very first structure to develop within an embryo. Around it then grows the spine. From there, all other nerves and blood vessels spread out from the brain to the rest of the body.

Spinal nerve stress, which is also referred to as vertebral subluxations, is a misalignment of the spinal column, skull, and/or hips.

This misalignment can irritate, stretch or impinge the proper functioning of the nervous system. Spinal stress or interference of the nervous system can weaken internal organs and reduce healing potential leading to disease and disorder of all kinds.

You may think that things such as **colic, ear infections, breastfeeding problems, allergies, fevers, asthma, tonsillitis, bed-wetting or sleep disturbances** are an inherent part of being a child. However, spinal subluxations can be a major source of all of these problems. Research and studies have proven in many

instances that once these stresses are removed a child quickly returns to a healthy state. Once the nervous system is free to operate without irritation, children are able to move or maintain positions without any discomfort. For example, with a newborn that won't suckle properly, a chiropractic evaluation of the C1-C2 vertebrae (where the baby has to work to hold their head) may indicate spinal stress. Once removed, they are more likely to be able to breastfeed without any discomfort in their feeding position.

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How does Spinal Stress Occur?

From within the womb to adolescence, children are suspect to vertebral subluxations. Here's a look at how:

- Physical stress can start while in the womb with the baby lying in a distorted or twisted position.
- The birthing process can cause spinal stress on newborns through the use of forceps, vacuum extraction and cesarean sections. The involvement of vertebrae C1 (just below the skull) occurs quite frequently from birth trauma.
- At eight to ten weeks of age a child starts to hold their head in an upright position. During this time frame the cervical curve of the neck is developing and sometimes a lower cervical vertebrae may become misaligned.
- At five months a child can push their upper bodies up with their forearms and maintain this position putting pressure on their mid and low back.
- As your child reaches ten months and continues to grow they are beginning to stand, crawl and walk. They have a tendency to "plop" down or simply fall, which can stress the sacroiliac area (pelvis and hips).
- Having the spine checked during these developmental stages can prevent not only spinal subluxations but also many other problems that are related to them.

Children and Massage Therapy

Just as adults need positive touch, so too do children. Every child, from infancy to the teen years can benefit from massage therapy.

Babies respond well to massage, and show improved temperament, decreased instance of illness, and less fussiness. Babies find abdominal and back stroking to be particularly soothing, although the entire body will typically be treated. Treatments for babies are short; typically 15-20 minutes long.

Older children can also greatly benefit from massage therapy. Massage has a positive effect on a child's de-

veloping tissues, helping with posture and range of motion. Additionally, massage can be used to treat soft tissue injuries due to sprains, strains, subluxations, dislocations, and many other types of injuries.

Massage has also been shown to have a positive effect on depression, mood, and the immune system in children.

An article published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry found that children receiving 30 minutes of massage daily for five days had less anxiety than children who did not.

A second study, published in the Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies, discovered that massage therapy improved both mood and immune system function in children with leukemia.

A study on massage and premature babies showed 15 minutes of daily massage and passive movement exercises promoted weight gain and increased appetite. Those babies who did not receive massage actually lost weight.

Source: Rattray, *Clinical Massage Therapy* (2000)

Children and Sports... and Back to Health!

Adult athletes have long known about the benefits of chiropractic care and massage therapy. But did you know athletic children can also benefit from these services?

Child athletes are a special case for treatment, as their bodies are still growing. Most children have lax ligaments and bones that have not fully hardened. Many are hypermobile and are still developing their strength and reflexes, which means they are not fully capable of working in the outer ranges of their motion.

Psychologically, most young athletes have not had much experience with injury. This means that they may have unrealistic perceptions of pain and injury severity, so developing rehabilitative treatment plans may be more difficult.

Chiropractic Care

Children can benefit from Chiropractic care whether they are just starting a new sport or have been doing it for years. Dr. Rodwin can assess the child for any potential spinal issues prior to beginning the activity, and advise or provide treatment for any conditions found. She can also assess and treat any subluxations or other joint injuries that may occur due to sports activities or injuries.

Massage Therapy

Massage is an excellent method of rehabilitation for over-worked or injured muscles in children. The Massage Therapist will take into account the child's growing body and state of injury when assessing and treating sports-related injuries. Treatments for children are typically shorter in length than in their adult counterparts.

Active Release Technique

For very young children, Active Release Technique (ART) is probably not advised, as the treatments can be somewhat uncomfortable. However, in older children, especially teens, ART is an extremely effective way of treating soft tissue injuries and adhesions.

Orthotics

Orthotics can be used to correct misalignments in the foot's arch structure. They can also be used to realign in-toeing and out-toeing problems, correct over-pronation, or help with knee and hip issues. Also, much like in adults, specialized sports orthotics can be made specific to the child's feet and the sport they are playing.

Not sure which treatment approach is right for your child? Speak to any member of our health care team, and we'll advise you on what works best!