

READ THIS BEFORE YOU VISIT A CHIROPRACTOR

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Why do 22 million Americans visit chiropractors each year? For many patients, it's a safe and effective treatment for conditions like back pain and tension headaches. It may even help you to avoid needing surgery or medication.

Chiropractic is based on the belief that your body can heal itself if your muscles and bones are properly aligned. Practitioners must complete a four-year doctoral program and are considered physician-level providers in many government programs.

Reduce pain and restore your mobility through chiropractic care. Take a look at this quick introduction.

What to Expect From a Chiropractor

About half of American adults have had at least one chiropractic session.

Whether it's your first time or you're a regular, consider these steps for making the experience successful:

- 1. Be selective.** Your doctor or websites such as the American Chiropractic Association can help you find a licensed chiropractor. You can also ask about their specialty if you need someone with experience in football injuries or geriatrics.
- 2. Coordinate care.** Give your chiropractor and any member of your health team as much information as possible about your medical history, prescriptions, and other issues. That will help you to receive the best care possible.

3. **Focus on manipulation. The main part of your treatment will probably be manual adjustments of your spine and joints.** Chiropractors use their hands to perform a variety of manipulations that are usually quick and forceful.

4. **Ask about extras.** Some offices will also offer a number of related treatments. Traditionally, this has usually meant counseling on diet, exercise, and other lifestyle habits. In recent years, more services have been added, such as laser therapy and ultrasound.

5. **Know your risks.** While chiropractic is generally considered safe, **it's important to be cautious if you have certain conditions.** For example, a gentler touch is required if you have low bone density due to osteoporosis.

6. **Check your insurance.** Unlike some forms of alternative medicine, chiropractic care is covered by many insurance plans. That includes Medicare and some Medicaid plans.

How to Avoid Needing a Chiropractor

Back pain is the most common reason for chiropractic visits, representing more than one-third of total complaints.

Try these simple lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of injuries:

1. **Straighten up.** Correct posture protects you from back pain. Try to maintain the 3 natural curves in your spine by standing up straight. Exercises to stretch and strengthen your back help too.

2. **Limit sitting.** You've probably heard that prolonged sitting can cause health issues, including back pain. **Take a break and walk around at least once every**

hour.

3. **Change your sleep position.** Do you wake up feeling sore? Relieve the pressure on your spine by sleeping on your back or side rather than your stomach.
4. **Lighten your load.** Your back may be aching because you carry around too much stuff. Common offenders including overstuffed wallets for men and giant handbags for women.
5. **Lift correctly.** Learn to pick up heavy objects safely. Bend your knees and hold them close to your body.
6. **Feed your bones.** A diet rich in calcium and vitamin D may help slow down bone loss due to aging. Drink your milk and go outdoors each day for a little sun.
7. **Quit smoking. An increased risk of back pain is one of the less publicized consequences of smoking.** This may be related to nicotine interfering with circulation and an association between smoking and depression. Ask your chiropractor for tips on how to quit the habit.

If you prefer natural methods of healing, try chiropractic care. You may be one of the millions of patients who experience significant relief through spinal adjustments and similar techniques.