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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Q&A about Chiropractic

Over 4,000 different people from within Merritt have received chiropractic treatment in my office over the past seven years. During their first visit, a few of them had questions about potential risk factors associated with chiropractic care.

Of all the questions these patients did have, some were asked more frequently. I will list them below and try to briefly answer them.

- 1) **Is Chiropractic New?**  
Not at all. In fact, chiropractic has been around and practiced safely for over 100 years, and, in fact, manipulation as practiced by chiropractors, has been documented as being performed in ancient Greek and Egyptian times.
- 2) **What kind of education and training do chiropractors have?**  
Chiropractors are doctors so it will come as no surprise that the training and education is very rigorous and demanding. Chiropractors must have 6 years of post-secondary education, including no less than 4500 hours of classroom and clinical instruction at an institution approved by the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCEC).
- 3) **I'd feel better if I knew that many people visited a chiropractor, do you have any numbers?**  
Over three million Canadians see a chiropractor every year, which is about 12% of the population. In Merritt this figure is around 50% of the population. The good news is that those numbers are on the rise with more and more Canadians finding out how good they feel when they include chiropractic as part of their health care needs.
- 4) **Some of my friends have expressed concern about chiropractic safety and effectiveness.**  
Any health care procedure has the potential for things to go wrong. This can range from the very minor, such as a soft tissue irritation, to something more

serious, such as a vascular accident. You should remember, however, that when compared to other therapies, chiropractic is safer and more effective. In fact, people usually undergo chiropractic care before moving onto something that might carry greater risk.

**5) Is it safer for me to take over-the-counter medications rather than visit a chiropractor?**

This is a good question. Many people think nothing of taking pain relievers or drugs to reduce pain, often caused by inflammation. The risk of serious complications or even death attributed to the use of NSAIDS (drugs for reducing inflammation like aspirin and ibuprofen) is greater than the slight risk of injury with chiropractic treatment for neck pain. This is a scientific fact and not an exaggeration relative to the comparative danger of using simple medications. Not many of us think of these risks when we reach for a bottle of pills. The bottom line is simple – chiropractic care is safe and effective with less risk than many medications or medical interventions.

**6) My back and neck hurt terribly; will a chiropractic adjustment be too painful for me?**

You may feel light pressure on your spinal joints and/or a popping sound, the result of joints opening quickly. Adjustments rarely hurt; instead, you may have immediate pain relief and feel more relaxed.

**7) Something about getting my neck treated makes me nervous. Is it possible that my instincts are right?**

Up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of patients receive a neck adjustment as part of their individual treatment. A chiropractor would not include neck adjustments in your treatment if there were any indication that you would be at risk. Talk to a chiropractor about your concerns. A chiropractor will only include neck adjustments in your treatment if you give him or her permission and if there is an objective clinical reason for treating your neck as part of your overall spinal care. Obviously if you present with a neck problem, a chiropractor should be treating that particular part of the spine.

**8) Is there a connection between strokes and chiropractic treatment?**

There is only a risk with neck treatment and this risk is very rare. The research literature estimates the risk of having a stroke that may be related to chiropractic treatments to be one in several millions of treatments (anywhere from 1 in 400,000 to 1 in several millions). In fact, scientific literature suggests that you are about 5 times more likely to be hit by lightning or suffer a stroke in normal daily living, such as from head movements, medication or vascular disease, than you are in association with chiropractic care.

If you have any further questions about chiropractic care, feel free to call me at my office or email me at [drgage@telus.net](mailto:drgage@telus.net).