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

What is an Adjustment?

The term "adjustment" refers to the specific manipulation chiropractors apply to vertebrae that have abnormal movement patterns or fail to function normally. The objective of the chiropractic treatment is to loosen the restricted or jammed vertebrae, which results in an increased range of motion, reduced nerve irritability/pain and improved overall function.

The adjustment made by the chiropractor consists of a quick but short thrust or pressure applied to a vertebra, which is often accompanied by an audible release of gas (joint cavitation) within the joint. The audible sound is caused by the release of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide, which releases joint pressure, not the cracking of a joint. The sensation is usually relieving, though minor discomfort has been reported (that usually lasts for only a short duration) if the surrounding muscles are in spasm or the patient tenses up during the chiropractic procedure.

There are times when joint cavitation or cracking does not occur and this is often due to either significant muscle spasm or the patient may not be adequately relaxed during the chiropractic procedure. At times like this, it is sometimes best for the chiropractor to apply ice, have the patient rest, or do electrical stimulation and trigger point therapy prior to attempting spinal manipulation.

Other than restoring the motion of the joint being treated, there are other positive effects of a chiropractic adjustment. More specifically, a single chiropractic adjustment has effects on many different types of nerves (sensory nerve, motor nerve, and sympathetic nerve).

The sensory and motor nerve effects of a chiropractic manipulation include:

- increased joint range of motion and reduction of pain
- increased skin pain tolerance level
- increased paraspinal muscle pressure pain tolerance
- reduced muscle electrical activity and tension

The sympathetic nervous system effects of a chiropractic manipulation include:

- increased blood flow and skin temperature to extremities
- blood pressure reduction

Blood chemistry changes after a chiropractic manipulation include:

- increased secretion of melatonin
- increased plasma beta endorphin levels
- elevation of Substance P and enhanced neutrophil respiratory burst
- pupillary diameter changes

There are many different techniques or methods of treatment that a chiropractor can choose from and there is a certain skill level and "art" involved when doing an adjustment or manipulation. It is also very important for the chiropractor to determine when not to use an adjustment, which is the reason for the extensive academic load placed on the chiropractic student (4 years of college plus 4 years at a chiropractic college).

The number of chiropractic treatments required for the particular patient varies significantly due to the degree of the injury and the variability between patients (amount the patient exercises, how much arthritis is present, and how long the problem has existed).

Chiropractors successfully use manipulation for many different different types of problems. A list of them can be found on our website at www.merrittchiro.com. If you would like to know how a chiropractor may be able to help you with your problem, feel free to contact our office.