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

Chiropractic Neck Manipulation Facts

Chiropractic care is widely recognized as one of the safest, drug-free, surgery-free therapies available for the treatment of back pain, neck pain, headaches, and other musculoskeletal conditions. Few other therapies can demonstrate a better safety record for the treatment of spinal pain syndromes. Of course, no health treatment is completely free of potential adverse effects. Even common over-the-counter medicines carry a risk. Fortunately, the vast majority of adverse effects associated with spinal adjustments are typically minor and short lived.

How safe is a neck adjustment?

Typical neck adjustments carried out by a qualified Chiropractor are very safe and gentle. In each case, the Chiropractor will evaluate the need for the adjustment. There is a rare risk of stroke or stroke-like symptoms associated with adjustment of the neck. But, you have greater odds of getting hit by lightning, or dying from consuming an aspirin.

Research published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal puts the risk of serious side effects at one in 5.85 million adjustments. Reports on the subject over the past 40 years present a range of estimates based on the different research methodologies. However, all of the published studies to date agree that the risk is extremely low. That is less than your risk of getting struck by lightning or of dying while skiing or playing soccer. Most chiropractors, during their entire professional lives, do not have a single case of a patient experiencing serious adverse effects.

How does that compare to other risk factors?

There are many risk factors for stroke including blood clotting problems, hypertension, smoking, high cholesterol, use of birth control pills, heart problems and trauma such as sport injuries or blows to the head from an accident. All carry a greater degree of risk than a spinal adjustment. Strokes or stroke-like symptoms are also associated with many normal everyday activities such as cradling a phone between your ear and shoulder during a prolonged conversation, having your hair washed at a beauty parlor, dental procedures, painting a ceiling, and turning your head while driving. Strokes also occur spontaneously in some people for no apparent reason.

What are the risks for other therapies?

Spinal adjustment is significantly safer than other common therapies for back and neck pain and headache. Long-term use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for pain cause 1,000 serious complications, and 100-200 deaths per million cases. Surgeries for neck and back pain cause 15,600 cases of paralysis or stroke per million cases, and 6,900 deaths per million.

Is neck adjustment a forceful action?

No, it is not. Neck adjustment is done within the normal range of motion. This normal range is less than what is required to turn you head when backing up a car.

Adjustment of a joint is a highly skilled procedure, which requires relatively little pressure. This has been clearly demonstrated in studies to determine the degree of physical stress applied during adjustment. It is skill, not strength, which is needed to conduct a safe, effective adjustment. It is for this reason that you are encouraged to go to a skilled Chiropractor for adjustments, rather than to other professionals who are not adequately trained for this procedure. Chiropractic education in Canada is an intensive four-year program that occurs after three years of university undergraduate studies. By the time they graduate, Canadian Chiropractors are among the most skilled in the world.

Does the medical profession regard neck adjustments as safe and appropriate treatment?

Yes, Most Chiropractors have excellent relationships with physicians and cross-refer patients on a routine bases. Depending on a patient's problems, their care may be co-managed by both a doctor of Chiropractic and a medical doctor. Further evidence of the respect which chiropractors has within the medical community was the presence of Canadian Chiropractors on the heath care team for Canada's athletes at the 2002 Winter Olympics, as well as previous Olympics and Pan Am games.