



## What is chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a primary health-care profession that specialises in the diagnosis, treatment and overall management of conditions that are due to mechanical dysfunction of the joints, particularly those of the spine, and their effects on the nervous system. Chiropractors treat problems with joints, bones and muscles, and the effects they have on the nervous system. Working on all the joints of the body, concentrating particularly on the spine, they use their hands to make often gentle, specific adjustments (the chiropractic word for manipulation) to improve the efficiency of the nervous system and release the body's natural healing ability. Chiropractic does not involve the use of any drugs or surgery.

## History of chiropractic

Written records from the ancient Greek and Chinese civilizations, dating back several thousand years, refer to spinal adjustments. The inception of modern chiropractic can be traced back to 1875 when Canadian Daniel David Palmer performed the first chiropractic adjustment and went on to found The Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa in 1897.

The 20th century saw the growth and development of the profession worldwide, gaining recognition and respect for the place it has taken in the primary care environment. Influential research has underpinned the development of the profession and has come both from both within and outside of the chiropractic research communities.

Chiropractic is unique in that the profession is organised internationally and there are internationally set standards for education.

## Regulated Profession

In common with medical practitioners and dentists, all chiropractors are registered by law under the Chiropractors Act 1994 and the title 'Chiropractor' is protected under this legislation. The profession is statutorily regulated through the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) and it is illegal to practise as a chiropractor without being registered with the GCC. All British Chiropractic Association members are registered with the GCC.

## **British Chiropractic Association - The Gold Standard**

The British Chiropractic Association (BCA) is the largest and longest-standing association for chiropractors in the UK, requiring the highest standards of education, training and conduct from its members.



Founded in 1925, members abide by a strict code of ethics and the association only accepts members who have graduated from an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education after a minimum of four years full-time training.

The BCA ensures its chiropractors maintain high standards of conduct, practice, education and training. All BCA members are covered by a high quality professional indemnity insurance and the Association operates a robust professional standards and complaints management process. The BCA was a founder member of the European Chiropractors Union and the World Federation of Chiropractic.

### **Education and training**

The title of chiropractor is protected by law and as a result only practitioners who are registered with the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) can call themselves chiropractors. The GCC has set the standards of education in chiropractic and all chiropractors must have graduated from an accredited institution before being accepted onto the Register.



Courtesy of AECC

There are two fully internationally accredited institutions offering a full time course in the UK; Anglo European College of Chiropractic (AECC) and Welsh Institute of Chiropractic at the University of Glamorgan (WIOC).

The BCA only accepts graduates who have gone through a minimum four-year full-time internationally-accredited course. The syllabus covers in-depth training in a variety of subjects including life sciences, biomechanics, clinical medicine and differential diagnosis. Practitioners also undergo practical training in adjustment and supervised clinical training, where they have hands-on practice in treating patients. Graduates who are members of the BCA undertake an additional year of supervised training as a requirement of membership. The General Chiropractic Council has a mandatory requirement for chiropractors to undertake a programme of continuing professional development, (CPD), as a condition of annual re-registration.

## How a chiropractor makes a diagnosis

Diagnosis is reached only after thorough examination of the patient, including:

- Case history and physical examination
- Standard orthopaedic and neurological tests
- Observation of posture to assess biomechanical stresses
- Examination of individual joints
- X-rays or imaging (when clinically necessary)



## Treatment and patient management

Treatment consists of a wide range of manipulative techniques designed to improve the function of the joints, relieving pain and muscle spasm. Such skilled manipulation is very specific, directed at individual joints in order to reduce strains and improve mobility in one area without disturbing another.

BCA chiropractors support the treatment they offer with individual counselling and advice about the patient's lifestyle, work and exercise, in order to help in managing the condition and preventing a recurrence of the problem.

In comparison with osteopaths and physiotherapists, chiropractors tend to use manipulation as the main form of treatment, as well as mechanised treatment tables and less use of soft tissue or massage techniques. X-rays may be used in the diagnostic process if clinically justified.



## Conditions suitable for treatment

Conditions suitable for chiropractic treatment include:

- Neck pain due to posterior joint and ligament strain with referred pain or parenthesis. This might involve nerve root irritation which could be discogenic or related to degenerative spondylosis.
- Tension headaches due to dysfunction of the upper cervical spine and muscle spasm.
- Thoracic spine pain with involvement of the costo-vertebral joints which might also affect other body systems.
- Low back pain due to facet joint, sacro-iliac and ligament strains with associated muscle spasm and referred pain which might also affect other body systems.
- Disc herniation with nerve root involvement, tension signs and even mild neurological deficits.
- Nerve root irritation due to lateral spinal canal stenosis with degenerative changes, and even when there are signs of neurogenic claudication.
- Peripheral joint problems such as shoulder capsulitis and rotator cuff tendinitis, lateral epicondylitis and carpal tunnel syndrome. These conditions present as local problems but can involve the cervical spine and may benefit from treatment of both areas.

- Knee ligament sprains and mild meniscal tears.
- Ankle injuries.
- Dysfunction of the joints of the hands and feet.

### Are there any risks?

Chiropractic has far fewer risks than many other treatments for your problem. Serious side effects are extremely uncommon and research shows that chiropractic is one of the safest and most effective forms of treatment available. Your BCA chiropractor will, of course, be happy to discuss all your concerns regarding treatment.

### Who can be treated?



People of all ages can benefit from chiropractic treatment.

### For more information or to find a BCA chiropractor in your local area:

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