

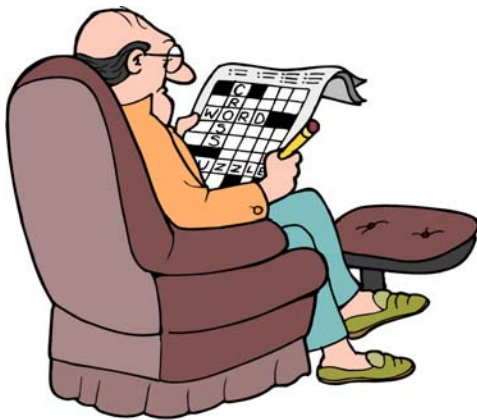
OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Michiel Rorick

Chiropractic for Seniors

Did you know that seniors benefit from chiropractic care as much as their younger counterparts? The use of chiropractic is skyrocketing among older adults. Why? Studies show that chiropractic helps with issues common among senior citizens, such as chronic pain, osteoarthritis, posture and balance.

Dr. Rorick urges patients to learn how chiropractic can help seniors — with everything from bolstered quality of life to extended longevity.



More Seniors Turn to Chiropractic

Just how popular is chiropractic care for seniors? When researchers surveyed 2,055 individuals age 65 or older, they found that 20 percent had visited an alternative care practitioner during the previous year. Most of these visits were to doctors of chiropractic (*J Amer Ger Soc* 2000;48:1560-5).

In one analysis, 61.9 percent of those using CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) sought chiropractic care. Results revealed that the “most prevalent motivations for using CAM were pain relief (54.8%), improved quality of life (45.2%) and maintenance of health and fitness (40.5%).” (*J Gerontological Nursing* 2003;29:20-8.)

Read on for details on how chiroprac-

tic is improving the lives of countless seniors.

Alleviating Depression & Pain

Chiropractors, like Dr. Rorick, know that chronic pain is devastating for seniors. It often leads to further impairment, such as depression and cognitive decline. In one analysis conducted over a three-year period, investigators surveyed 49,971 nursing home residents. Surprisingly, a substantial 26 percent of subjects reported daily, nonmalignant pain.

Pain sufferers had significantly higher odds of depression, social isolation and limited activities of daily living, compared with pain-free peers (*J Amer Ger Soc* 1999;47:936-42).

Another report followed 226 seniors with a history of musculoskeletal pain for one year. Individuals who reported suffering musculoskeletal pain for the longest duration were more than twice as likely to struggle with emotional depression, compared with pain-free individuals (*J Amer Ger Soc* 2003;51:1092-8).

Chiropractic to the Rescue

Fortunately, chiropractic care is a tried and true method for slashing pain. Pain throughout the body is often caused by a common condition called **vertebral subluxation**. This problem

arises from misaligned vertebrae (spinal bones) and can limit mobility and range of motion. Doctors of chiropractic use precise and specialized maneuvers, called **chiropractic adjustments**, to correct vertebral subluxations, thereby eliminating ensuing pain.

Investigators pooled data on 805 chiropractic patients cared for in 96 practices throughout the United States and Canada. All subjects were 55 years of age or older.

In total, 72.3 percent of subjects sought chiropractic care for pain relief. Back pain was the top complaint, with 32.9 percent experiencing the disorder. Two-thirds reported that another physician was also treating their current complaint — and 54.9 percent of subjects sought relief for conditions of more than six weeks duration.

Four weeks after initiating care, 19.6 percent of subjects were considered to be significantly recovered. Subjects who had higher Pain Disability Index (PDI) scores at the study’s onset showed more improvement than patients with lower PDI scores. In addition, patients considered to be recovered had a 7.3 percent drop in pain-medication use (*J Amer Ger Soc* 2000;48:534-45).



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Preserving Stability & Avoiding Falls

Each year, thousands of seniors suffer debilitating falls, causing bruises, broken bones and even death.

Research shows that reaction time, balance, posture, footwear and attempting to multitask all play a role in the risk of falling.

In one study, researchers evaluated primary variables for stability in 125 seniors: 45 subjects who had fallen at least once in the previous year and 80 non-fallers. Non-fallers had significantly faster reaction times, greater balance, heightened confidence in their ability to remain balanced and less postural sway compared with fallers (*Arch Gerontol Geriatr* 2004;38:11).

Doctors of chiropractic help patients correct posture and increase mobility, which help reduce risks for falling. By correcting vertebral subluxations, chiropractors increase range of motion. When the spine has more flexibility, seniors are more likely to be able to react and turn quicker to remain balanced and prevent a fall.



Easing Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis, occurring when cartilage in joints wears down over time. OA most commonly affects joints in hands, hips, knees and spine.

Many seniors suffer from OA and turn to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory

drugs (NSAIDs) and other drug therapies to combat the pain. However, NSAIDs are loaded with side effects, and prolonged use can have profound effects on the gastrointestinal tract.

Fortunately, research shows that chiropractic care helps reduce OA symptoms. One study included 252 OA patients with low-back pain. Researchers randomly assigned subjects to either a chiropractic group who received chiropractic adjustments plus moist heat or a moist-heat only cohort. Both groups participated in 20 care sessions, over several weeks.

At sessions one, five, 10, 15 and 20, sufferers rated pain, activities of daily living and range of motion (ROM). The chiropractic group reported greater and more rapid pain reduction and ROM improvement than the moist heat group. Those under chiropractic care also enjoyed greater improvements in daily living activities in four of the nine areas measured.

“Chiropractic care combined with heat is more effective than heat alone for treating OA-based lower back pain. Pain reduction occurs more rapidly and to a greater degree, and ROM increases more rapidly and to a greater degree.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2006;29:107-14.)

Increasing Longevity

Searching for the fountain of youth? Look to your local doctor of chiropractic. Left unchecked, chronic back pain is proven to shorten one’s lifespan. Over a five-year period, researchers followed approximately 1,500 seniors aged 70 to 85. Daily back pain was linked to reduced longevity, quality of life and mobility and increased risks for a coronary heart event (*Spine* 2007;32:2012-18).

Staying Sharp

Believe it or not, cognitive decline isn’t an inevitable aspect of aging. It’s obvious that daily social interaction and mental stimulation, such as reading and solving puzzles, keep the brain sharp. But did you know that regular

chiropractic care may also preserve mental acumen?

Researchers in Auckland, New Zealand, divided 36 participants into two groups: a chiropractic group who received chiropractic adjustments to the upper cervical spine [spine of the neck], and a control group who underwent a sham procedure. All 36 patients exhibited upper cervical vertebral subluxations at the beginning of the study.

After both procedures, investigators asked participants to identify whether objects appeared normal or as mirror-reversed on a computer screen. The researchers then measured each participant’s reaction time. Individuals in the chiropractic group demonstrated a 14.9 percent “significantly greater” improvement in reaction time, while the control group showed a mere 8 percent improvement.

“The results of this study have demonstrated a significant improvement in a complex reaction-time task after an upper cervical adjustment. These results provide evidence that upper cervical adjustment may affect cortical processing.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:246-51.)

Chiropractic for all Ages

If you or a senior you know suffers from any of the issues presented in this *Optimal Health University*[™] issue, consider giving chiropractic a try. During your initial checkup and throughout care, please share with us any questions you have about how chiropractic can improve your quality of life. We strive to be your partner in wellness.

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