

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Steven L. Smith, DC

## Chiropractic Safe for Babies and Kids

*Little spines need chiropractic care too. But some parents wonder if chiropractic is safe for children of all ages.*

*Research confirms what doctors of chiropractic, such as Dr. Smith, have asserted for decades: Chiropractic is beneficial, effective and safe for children from tots to teens. Dr. Smith wants to share this most recent research about pediatric chiropractic care.*

### Modified Adjustments

Doctors of chiropractic, such as Dr. Smith, detect and correct dysfunctional areas of the spine, known as **vertebral subluxations**. Vertebral subluxations limit motion and can cause dysfunction throughout the spine.

Through **chiropractic adjustments**, specialized maneuvers designed to fix these “stuck” vertebrae, chiropractors realign the spine and increase mobility.

In chiropractic school, doctors learn specific adjusting techniques for children. Dr. Smith makes adjustments safe for vertebrae of all sizes by modifying each chiropractic adjustment to match a patient’s growing spine. For example, the intensity of adjustments infants receive are different than those young children receive. Typically, there is no “popping” sound from the these low-force pediatric adjusting techniques.

### Chiropractic Common for Kids



Just how common is chiropractic care for children? Very common. Researchers tracked pediatric chiropractic visits to 90 chiropractors in Boston, Mass., over a one-year period. On average, children and adolescents made up 11 percent of the chiropractors’ patients each week. There were approximately 420,000 pediatric chiropractic visits during the year. “Children and adolescents constitute a substantial number of patients in chiropractics,” conclude the authors (*Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2000;154:401-7).

### Safety of Chiropractic for Infants and Toddlers

Chiropractic for kids may be common, but is it safe? Yes, say researchers, who note that chiropractic adjustments are extremely safe for the youngest patients: infants and toddlers.

Investigators pored over the records of 781 patients younger than 3 years of age who were cared for at a teaching clinic practice in Bournemouth, England. During the three-year studied period, 73.5 percent of the patients were 12 weeks of age or younger when they began care.

Out of 697 children, 85 percent of parents reported improvement. Only seven parents reported an “adverse” effect, which was never severe. The authors conclude, “There were no seri-



ous complications resulting from chiropractic treatment (reactions lasting >24 hours or severe enough to require hospital care).”

“This study shows that for the population studied, chiropractic manipulation produced very few adverse effects and was a safe form of therapy in the treatment of patients in this age group.” (*JMPT* 2008;31:419-23.)

### Neck Safety

Research has proven cervical (neck) spine adjustments to be safe for children as well.

In a large-scale study performed in England, researchers documented the safety of cervical (neck) spine adjustments in 19,722 patients in all different age brackets. Participants had received 50,276 cervical adjustments, and researchers tracked possible “adverse advents” up to seven days after chiropractic care.

The scientists reported that “there were no reports of serious adverse events.”



**Steven L. Smith, DC, Hickory Chiropractic Clinic, PLLC**  
**256 Third Avenue NW, Hickory, NC 28601 (828) 323-8998**  
**www.hickorychiro.com contact@hickorychiro.com**

“Although minor side effects following cervical spine manipulation were relatively common, the risk of a serious adverse event, immediately or up to 7 days after treatment, was low to very low,” conclude the authors (*Spine* 2007;32:2375-8).

### **Solving Versus Masking Pain**

In a typical day, kids’ spines are subjected to a variety of traumas. Learning to crawl or walk, sports injuries, heavy backpacks, stress, slumping, uncomfortable seats, etc. all affect alignment and can cause spine and neck pain. And the common “cure” — continually popping painkillers — can cause long-term harm, especially for developing bodies and brains.

Chiropractic is a safe, all-natural and effective solution to spine and neck pain, without the side effects of medication. Rather than masking the symptoms with a drug, chiropractic targets the heart of the problem, which often involves misaligned vertebrae.

### **Headaches and Migraines**

Did you know that children and adolescents are as prone to headaches as adults?

One study included 127 participants as young as age 10 through age 70, all of whom had at least one migraine episode each month. While 83 patients received chiropractic care for two months, the remaining 44 formed a control group, free from chiropractic.

The authors concluded that “the average response of the treatment group showed statistically significant improvement in migraine frequency, duration, disability, and medication use when compared with the control group.”

“Expressed in other terms, 22% of participants reported more than a 90% reduction of migraines as a consequence of the 2 months of SMT (spinal manipulative therapy). Approximately 50% more participants reported significant improvement in the morbidity of each episode.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:91-5.)

Fortunately, chiropractic is an effective, all-natural solution.



### **Non-Spine Related Care**

Did you know that doctors of chiropractic successfully care for pediatric conditions that are not related to spinal vertebrae or muscles (nonmusculoskeletal)? Researchers combed through peer-reviewed studies in major medical databases regarding chiropractic for nonmusculoskeletal problems.

The search yielded 179 studies covering 50 different nonmusculoskeletal conditions. “Evidence from controlled studies and usual practice supports chiropractic care (the entire clinical encounter) as providing benefit to patients with asthma, cervicogenic vertigo, and infantile colic.” The researchers also note that chiropractic care showed a “promising” benefit for otitis media (inflammation of the middle ear).

“For the few studies that did report, adverse effects of spinal manipulation for all ages and conditions were rare, transient, and not severe,” conclude the authors (*J Altern Complement Med* 2007;13:491-512).

### **More Formal Research Needed**

In a recently published study, researchers from Ontario, Canada, reviewed data from January 2004 to June 2007 for evidence regarding the

effectiveness, benefit and safety of pediatric adjustments. In their extensive evaluation, they pooled data from a variety of well-known databases as well as research conferences and symposiums. Their study updated a previous review published in 2005.

The search identified 1,275 citations, of which 57 met the eligibility criteria. The reviewers then determined each study’s strength of evidence. Results uncovered that there has been “no substantive shift” in rigorous scientific data over the last three years. Although chiropractors care for a range of pediatric problems, the researchers emphasized that more formal studies are needed to document how chiropractic helps kids.

“Chiropractors continue to treat a wide variety of pediatric health conditions. The evidence rests primarily with clinical experience, descriptive case studies and very few observational and experimental studies. The health interests of pediatric patients would be advanced if more rigorous scientific inquiry was undertaken to examine the value of manipulative therapy in the treatment of pediatric conditions.” (*Chiropr Osteopat* 2008;16:11).

### **Talk to Us**

Feel free to discuss any pediatric health issue with us, even if it’s not related to the spine. We’re your partners in health — for you and your children. Even if your child isn’t experiencing any neck or back pain, consider scheduling an appointment for him or her. Often, misaligned vertebrae can exist long before pain surfaces, and preventative care to avoid illness and pain is at the heart of chiropractic.

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