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## **“But Doc – Will it Hurt?!”**

**by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC**

Let's face it – we all have an aversion to pain; whether it is twisting your ankle, burning your finger on the stove or having a toothache.

As a chiropractor, I often have people have this question about the type of treatment that is most commonly used by a chiropractor – the spinal adjustment. The „adjustment“ is a type of manual manipulation which is very specifically utilized to improve the mobility and function of the joints of your body. When these joints become restricted in movement, this can affect how you move (your range of motion) and can contribute to many common ailments such as;

- Headaches.
- Whiplash.
- Back Pain.
- Neck Pain.

These are the most common complaints that patients present to the clinic with. There are many other conditions a chiropractor will see in the realm of neuromusculoskeletal problems. In other words, involving the nerves, muscles and joints (includes your ligaments). Chiropractors also deal with peripheral joint injuries (such as shoulder, hip and knee problems).

Peripheral joint injuries are commonly treated in this clinic which is recognized by the Canadian Sports Centre Atlantic.

### **Start with an Examination**

After asking a number of questions about your particular problem (this is referred to as reviewing your history), your chiropractor will examine the involved area. This can include evaluating your:

- Range of motion.
- Posture.
- Nerve function (reflexes, sensation, strength).
- Assessing joint function.
- Orthopedic testing.
- Muscle testing.

### **How do we treat it?**

Depending upon the problem, your chiropractor may decide on one of several approaches.

The most common, is the 'adjustment'. This technique is a manual or 'hands on' approach and helps to restore proper joint motion. This type of treatment can be used for both acute (new injuries) or chronic (long standing injuries) problems.

A 'popping', 'clicking' or 'cracking' is often heard with this technique – but don't worry – it is not your bones! The sound is a release of pressure within the joint – the technical term (in case you are interested) is 'cavitation'.

In the vast majority of cases, there is no pain or discomfort with a chiropractic adjustment. Chiropractors have been recognized internationally for over thirty (30) years (since the New Zealand Government Inquiry in 1979) as leaders in the field of spinal manipulation. With patients whom have not been treated previously, I explain the purpose of the adjustment and the expected treatment approach (with respect to type of treatment, frequency and duration). The treatment may also include soft tissue therapy techniques (such as myofascial release techniques and active release techniques), modalities (muscle stimulation and ultrasound) and rehabilitative exercise programs.

Your chiropractor may also advise you on specific rehabilitative exercises or a fitness program which you could do at a local gym or fitness centre (which is commonly referred to as a 'community based program').

### **What if I have concerns?**

Make sure you talk to your chiropractor about any concerns you may have. As I mentioned, the adjustment usually does not cause any pain or discomfort. In fact I often have patients comment "was that it?". I explain to my patients that they may notice some soreness or discomfort later that day or the next morning, in the area being treated. Most patients, if they do notice any discomfort, describe it as muscle soreness similar to when one does a new exercise or different program in the gym or has not been 'working out' on a regular basis.

### **Is it safe?**

Chiropractic spinal adjustments or manipulation is a very safe procedure. The risk of any adverse reaction of significance is rare. Over 125,000 people each day, receive chiropractic care across Canada. Chiropractic is becoming more and more a common approach which Canadians choose for conditions such as headaches, neck pain, whiplash and lower back pain.

### **How do I find a chiropractor?**

The majority of patients seen at our clinic were referred by their family physicians or medical specialists. You can also check with your friends and colleagues for a recommendation – chances are there are a few who already see a chiropractor which you may not be aware of. They can provide a recommendation as to a chiropractor they have found to be beneficial. You can also log onto the website for the provincial chiropractic association ([www.chiropractors.ns.ca](http://www.chiropractors.ns.ca)). There are chiropractors in most areas of the province.

### **Where can I learn more about chiropractic?**

In addition to the website of the Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors (NSCC) you can check the website of the Canadian Chiropractic Association ([www.chiropracticcanada.org](http://www.chiropracticcanada.org)) or our own clinic website ([www.halifaxchiropractic.ca](http://www.halifaxchiropractic.ca)).

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