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## WHAT DOES A DOCTOR OF CHIROPRACTIC DO?

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

When people think of Doctors of Chiropractic, it often brings to mind problem pain, headaches and back pain. But a common question is “What does a ch

At your first appointment, you will be asked to provide patient information, a general health questionnaire. Although you may only be seeing your chiropractor for back pain, there could be a number of other health conditions which may affect how your back problem is dealt with. For instance, if you have had a bone density scan, your chiropractor will want to know if it is normal, or if it determined that your hip is osteopenic (some bone loss) or osteoporotic. Depending upon the results (your “T-score”) this can play a role in the chiropractor’s decision as to what treatments can be contemplated or, if an alternative approach should be considered. It is important to complete the forms and answer all the questions. Be sure to list all medications you are on as well.

Your chiropractor will review the information you provided as well as any reports you bring along to your initial appointment. He or she will then discuss your problems in detail, asking such questions as:

- Where does it hurt?
- How long have you had this problem?
- What does the pain feel like?
- Does it radiate into your arms or legs?
- Does it bother you at certain times of the day, or at night?

Be sure to answer every question as completely as possible. It is also important to describe your pain in your own words. This helps your chiropractor formulate a list of questions about your problem(s). Once your chiropractor has thoroughly reviewed the “history” of your difficulties, he or she will start an examination.

In most cases, bringing along shorts to your appointment, helps to facilitate the examination procedures, and you may be asked to wear a gown to allow for a full examination of the spine. The examination tests would be selected by your chiropractor based on what type of problem you have. For example, this could include a physical assessment of how the joints in your spine are moving, the overall movement



motion) of your neck and back, orthopaedic type testing and a neurological (such as reflexes, testing sensation, and evaluation of muscle strength). Additional examination will be undertaken if your injury involves a joint of one of your extremities (shoulder, or knee).

If your injury is due to sports or a fitness activity, your chiropractor may refer you to a chiropractic sports specialist. Sports chiropractors have advanced training in the management of sports and athletic injuries which leads to the designation of a Fellow of the International Chiropractic Association (Canada); FCCSS(C).

Your chiropractor will also consider whether manipulation or adjustment techniques are appropriate for you based on a thorough history, examination, and if necessary, further investigation (such as a referral to a medical or chiropractic specialist) or imaging (such as x-rays). Once your chiropractor has completed the examination, all the relevant information will be considered in determining what the most likely cause of your problem is. Your health care professional refers to this as a clinical impression or diagnosis.

Prior to initiating your treatment, your chiropractor will also discuss what you can expect as far as a response to chiropractic care including the frequency and duration of appointments. If it took ten years for your lower back problem to develop, it can resolve in just one or two visits! However your chiropractor will be able to provide you with some information in this regard and please – do not hesitate to ask questions. Your chiropractor will provide information you may be unsure of. Periodic examinations may be scheduled to monitor your response to treatment, and determine if further chiropractic treatment or follow-up is necessary or clinically indicated. In some instances, the chiropractor may recommend a therapeutic trial over a short period of time (perhaps 2 to 4 weeks), to determine your response to the treatment.

In addition to the manipulation or adjustment techniques that were mentioned, your treatment may include ice therapy, a rehabilitative exercise program (very important to strengthen the injured areas), ergonomic suggestions (when sitting at your computer), and advice to assist you in maximizing the benefits of your treatment. If you want to start a generalized fitness program, your chiropractor may recommend that you try a new web based program [www.fitin15.ca](http://www.fitin15.ca). This was designed by chiropractors for people wanting to get active again.

Most importantly, if you have any questions about your conditions or your health, please be sure to ask questions and discuss these with your chiropractor.

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