

What to Expect at Your First



CHIROPRACTIC VISIT

Trying something new like scuba diving can be exciting. But trying an unfamiliar form of health care can cause some anxiety, even more so if you are feeling pain. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information that can help lead you through a typical first chiropractic visit. Knowing what to expect can help you approach the office visit with confidence. The goal of the first visit is for the chiropractic doctor to perform an examination and make a diagnosis so that you can be treated.

Let's look at what will typically happen during your visit.

History

Just like any other health care provider, a chiropractic doctor, also known as a chiropractor, will ask about your health history. Chiropractors mainly treat problems having to do with your muscles, nerves, joints, and bones, but they need to know the state of health of your whole body.

Be ready to talk about:

- Specific problems you are having
- How and when any injury happened (if you know)
- The nature of your pain, such as how severe your pain is, how frequently you feel it throughout the day, what it feels like (stabbing, dull, achy), and if it radiates to other parts of your body (like neck pain traveling down your arm)
- Any past stays in the hospital for this or other problems
- Any conditions you've been treated for or are currently being treated for

Exam

Next, a chiropractor will do a series of tests to help make a diagnosis. These tests may include:

- Asking you to move your body in certain ways, such as moving your head to look up, down, left, and right
- Testing for skin numbness
- Checking your reflexes, balance, and muscle strength

Your chiropractor may need more information to make a proper diagnosis. In these cases your doctor may refer you to get further tests. These tests can include X-rays, an MRI, or lab blood work.

Diagnosis

After your chiropractic doctor examines you and gets all the information back from any further tests that were ordered, he or she will make a diagnosis. Then he or she will put together a treatment plan. You may be treated during this first visit. Or if your doctor needs further information, like test results, you may be given an appointment to come back for treatment.

Treatment

Up to this point, you may feel that much of your first chiropractic visit is the same as an appointment with any other doctor. And you are right. Chiropractic doctors get a lot of the same training as medical doctors. But where a medical doctor is trained to treat using a variety of methods including medicines and surgery, a chiropractor learns to treat with adjustments and healing modalities such as massage and ultrasound.

So what is a chiropractic adjustment or manipulation? It is a highly controlled procedure designed to restore proper movement and function of your spine and other joints. Some patients report hearing a popping sound during their adjustments. This sound is caused by tiny pockets of gas releasing from your joints and is completely normal.

Follow-up Care

Sometimes all you need is one aspirin to take care of your headache. Sometimes all you need

is one treatment to relieve that kink in your neck. But most of the time chiropractic treatment works more like taking antibiotics. The best results come from a course of treatment over a period of time.

If your condition doesn't respond as well as the doctor expects, he or she may ask for further tests or refer you to another health care provider.

Ask your chiropractor if there are any tests, referrals, or treatments that might be helpful to use along with your current treatment plan. Other treatment options may include: physical therapy, acupuncture, massage therapy, nutritional services, behavioral health services, medicines, naturopathic services, and other services (such as speech and occupational therapy).

ASK YOUR CHIROPRACTIC DOCTOR

Don't be afraid to ask your chiropractic doctor questions. Ask any questions you have about chiropractic and your health in general. Good questions to start with are:

- What are your qualifications?
- Do you routinely treat people with my condition?
- Are there any side effects or complications of the treatment you recommend?
- How long will it take me to get well?
- Will any other health care providers need to be involved in my care?

