

# A Consumer's Guide to Chiropractic Care



BOARD *of*  
CHIROPRACTIC  
EXAMINERS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

## What is Chiropractic?

The chiropractic approach is prevention-based, focusing on diet, exercise, and lifestyle, and emphasizes natural methods to wellness. A typical chiropractic visit may include evaluation, adjustments, and other therapeutic methods to optimize health and function of the spine and/or arms and legs.



Chiropractic is a form of health care that focuses on the relationship between the nervous system, spine, and body's structure and function. It is most often used to treat neuromusculoskeletal conditions, such as problems with nerves, muscles, joints, bones, and/or connective tissues (such as cartilage, ligaments, and tendons).

## What is a Chiropractic Adjustment and Chiropractic Care?

A chiropractic adjustment is a manipulation of the spine that can help the functioning of your joints and nervous system. Chiropractic care can heal systemic and musculoskeletal problems, including:

- Headaches
- Neck pain
- Torticollis
- Pain, numbness, tingling in the arms, hands, legs, and/or feet
- Vertigo
- Difficulty breathing
- Spine or shoulder blade pain
- Lower back pain
- Sciatica
- Sports injuries
- Issues arising during pregnancy
- Pain from a fall or an auto accident

Although the main form of treatment in a chiropractic office is an adjustment, other methods may be used to enhance the effectiveness of the chiropractic adjustment. Adjustments may be performed with just the hands or with a handheld instrument or device to the spine. Methods of treatment include:

- Therapeutic ultrasound
- Electrical muscle stimulation
- H-wave
- Massage
- Low-level laser/cold laser
- Ergonomic counseling
- Therapeutic exercises
- Acupressure
- Manual trigger point therapy
- Decompression

## How Do I Select a Chiropractor?

The Board of Chiropractic Examiners (Board) advises consumers to check the license of any individual claiming to be a Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.). Chiropractic doctors must renew their license annually and post their license in plain view for consumers to see.

You can verify a license by checking the Board website at [www.chiro.ca.gov](http://www.chiro.ca.gov) and clicking on “License Search.” The search can also reveal additional information, such as whether the licensee has a pending or prior disciplinary action, or whether his or her license is on probation. You can also find out this information by contacting the Board by phone at (916) 263-5355 or toll-free at (866) 543-1311.

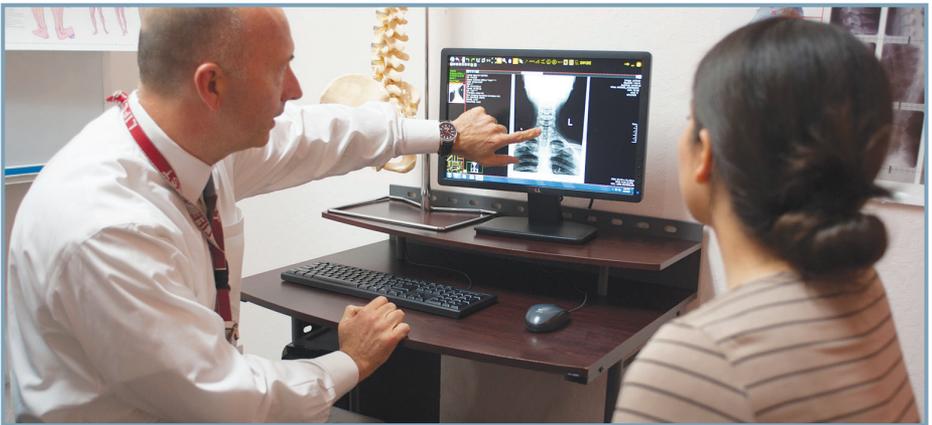
After you have checked the license, be sure to ask your chiropractor and chiropractic office questions about their treatments, costs, etc. Here are some sample questions:

- Do I need a referral from another medical provider?
- How much does a visit cost?
- What are my payment options?
- How often will I have to come?
- What is an adjustment?
- Will my treatment hurt?
- Do I have to have X-rays?
- How long does an appointment take?

You can also choose a chiropractor through referrals from friends, family, or your health care provider. However, remember to *always* check the license.

## What Can I Expect at My First Chiropractic Appointment?

At your first appointment, your chiropractor should thoroughly review your health history with you. Be sure to also discuss your specific symptoms with your chiropractor.



Your chiropractor should also conduct a complete diagnostic exam, which includes general tests such as blood pressure, pulse, respiration, and reflexes, as well as specific orthopedic and neurological tests to assess range of motion of the affected area of the body, muscle tone, muscle strength, or neurological integrity.

Based on the results of your history and examination, diagnostic studies may be helpful to more accurately diagnose your condition. The most common diagnostic studies for a chiropractor to perform or order include an X-ray, MRI, CT scan, or other laboratory tests such as blood tests or urinalysis.

Once the diagnosis is established, your chiropractor will determine if your condition will respond to chiropractic care.

At the end of your initial visit, your chiropractor should:

- Explain your diagnosed condition
- Recommend an individualized chiropractic treatment plan
- Advise you of the anticipated length of chiropractic care
- Review costs and payment plan options



## How Do I File a Complaint?

If you have a complaint regarding the chiropractic care you received, first try to resolve the issue directly with your chiropractic office.

However, if you feel your chiropractor violated State laws and guidelines, you should file a complaint. All complaints must be in writing. To obtain a complaint form, visit the Board's "Forms and Applications" web page. The written statement should include the nature of your complaint,

with specific details and any documents related to your complaint, such as patient records, photographs, contracts, invoices, and correspondence. You do not need to refer to specific sections of the law that you feel have been violated.

All written complaints received by the Board are reviewed by the Enforcement Unit to determine whether the Board has jurisdiction, and, if so, to prioritize the complaints. Complaints alleging sexual misconduct, gross negligence/incompetence, and insurance fraud are given priority attention and may be referred immediately to investigation.

The Board also has jurisdiction over other categories of complaints, including but are not limited to, conviction of a criminal offense, deceptive or misleading advertising, and unlicensed practice. The Board does not have jurisdiction in fee or billing disputes, general business practices, and personality conflicts. However, other civil channels are available to handle these issues.

## Our Mission

The Board of Chiropractic Examiners' paramount responsibility is to protect the health, welfare, and safety of the public through licensure, education, and enforcement in chiropractic care.

## Join Our Mailing List

Receive important information about the Board by subscribing to its e-mail subscription list. Go to the Board's website and click on "Join Our Mailing List" under "Quick Hits," and submit your e-mail address.

Also, stay connected and "like" us on Facebook  and follow us on Twitter .

## For More Information

If you need help with a chiropractor issue, visit the Board's website at [www.chiro.ca.gov](http://www.chiro.ca.gov) or call the Board at (916) 263-5355 or the Department of Consumer Affairs' Consumer Information Center at (800) 952-5210.



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