

It's not just back pain,
IT'S THE

BIG

PICTURE



Discover a healthy alternative





The extra stressors of weight-gain during pregnancy, breastfeeding posture, choice of footwear, and posture whilst multi-tasking can all negatively affect the spine.

THE BIG PICTURE

Some experts say as many as 80% of us will experience a back problem at some time in our lives¹. However, we often only think about caring for and managing the problem after it has happened – we wait until we are ill to take action.

Unfortunately, we tend to think of back pain as something to be treated **when it happens**, instead of something that can be **cared for and prevented** through healthy lifestyle decisions and maintaining our spinal health. And often when we do experience back pain, we do nothing about it!

A majority of Australians do not seek care for their back pain². Women seek care for back pain more often than men and persons who have never married are less likely to seek care.

A study in the Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health⁴ estimated the direct cost of low back pain in Australia in 2001 to be \$1.02 billion.

Back pain in Australian adults represents a massive health problem with a significant burden – **poor spinal health can affect all areas of life** – and its prevalence is affected by the “big picture” lifestyle decisions we make.

Fortunately, through their five year university training, chiropractors are expertly qualified to not only help you get to the cause of the pain, but help you maintain your long term spinal health.

THE BIG PICTURE

In Australia during 2000-01, expenditure on chronic back pain accounted for \$567 million³.

WHO SUFFERS FROM BACK PAIN?

THE BIG PICTURE

- Of the total Australian population in 2004-2005, 15% reported having back problems⁵ – approximately 3 million people.
- In Australia, adult males have a higher prevalence of back problems than females⁶, however, women seek care for lower back pain more often than men⁷.
- According to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics Yearbook, the proportion of people who reported back pain, back problems and disc disorders increased rapidly after early teenage years from 1% among those aged 10-14 years, to 23% among people aged 40-44 years⁸.
- Additional international research has shown that the steepest increase in the first episode of back pain for adolescent boys and girls was in the ages 12-14, and that over 50% of young women had had back pain by age 18 and young men by age 20⁹.
- In Australia, back problems were reported in 24% of persons in the 65-75 year age group in 2004-2005. Prevalence of back problems then declined with age with 18% of persons aged 75 years and over reporting the condition¹⁰.

Despite this, the majority of low back pain sufferers do not have contact with health care¹¹.

Self-treatment with over the counter analgesics, rest and heat are common¹².

These quick-fix approaches ignore the “big picture” – how your lifestyle decisions affect your long term spinal health.

SOCIAL MISCONCEPTIONS RE: BACK PAIN

Research has indicated that the general public still holds many misconceptions about back pain, including how it is caused, guidelines for best treatment and the scope of the problem.^{14,15} Most individuals believed that back pain is often the result of a “slipped disc” or “trapped nerve”. While this may rarely be the case, back pain can also be an indicator of how poor lifestyle decisions are affecting your health.

In any case, as the spinal health experts, chiropractors are uniquely positioned to provide their expertise in the diagnosis and management of spinal health related problems. Chiropractors are the experts in patient management - helping patients not only overcome pain, but maintain their spinal health through specialist care and lifestyle advice.

Authors of recent evidence-based clinical practice guidelines advocate that back pain is a benign, self-limiting condition, and recommend that early management include minimal medical intervention, reassurance, and advice to stay active.^{16,17}

THE BIG PICTURE

A study¹³ undertaken in Canada identified pessimistic beliefs about back pain in the general population, relating to coping strategies and caring for the problem.

Participants stated that they took time off from work for their last back episode, expressed dramatically more negative and pessimistic beliefs and reported using more passive coping strategies in response to the pain, including staying in bed more than usual.

Uncorrected postural issues, heavy school bags and poor dietary choices can all lead to spinal health problems as a child becomes an adult.



RECOVERY TIMES

A study undertaken in the European Spine Journal consisting of a systematic review of a number of research papers¹⁸ showed that the reported proportion of patients who still experienced back pain after 12 months following onset was 62% on average. Also, they found that the average prevalence of low back pain was 56% for patients with prior episodes of back pain, compared to just 22% for those who had no such history.

While chiropractic is a highly effective, safe and natural approach to pain relief, prevention is the key – maintaining your spinal health for the long term through regular chiropractic checkups and lifestyle consultation with your expertly qualified local chiropractor.

Another study in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics demonstrated that in more than 33% of the people who experience low-back pain, the pain lasts for more than 30 days. Only 9% of the people who had low-back pain for more than 30 days were pain free 5 days later¹⁹.

Many people believe back pain is a condition that will heal on its own, however, this is not accurate. When back pain is not cared for or managed appropriately, it may go away for a short period of time, but will most likely return.

Spinal health problems related to childhood accidents often go unnoticed, as initial “dull aches” or “growing pains” can develop into an accepted part of everyday life.



MAINTENANCE IS KEY!

The vast majority of people consider back pain as something to treat when it happens, usually through prescription and over-the-counter drugs. However, while drugs may relieve pain temporarily, they are a quick fix solution which ignore the “bigger picture”, including underlying structural problems and lifestyle habits.

Back pain can be a sign of something greater, and should not be viewed as an inevitable part of life that should be “put up” with. **Back pain can be an indicator of how an individual’s poor lifestyle choices are affecting their health.**

While back pain can affect us in all stages of life, thankfully there is plenty that can be done to get to the cause of the problem, learn ways to prevent it, and maintain the health of the spine and the body as a whole on an ongoing basis.

THE BIG PICTURE

Both prescription and over-the-counter drugs are large ticket items for arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions in Australia, with these accounting for the greatest growth in expenditure between 1993 and 2001.²⁰

DISCOVER A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE

Chiropractic is a safe, proven, and effective drug free choice in spinal healthcare. Not only can chiropractic assist with pain relief, it corrects dysfunction in the musculoskeletal system and nerve system, enabling individuals to unlock their full potential to be healthy. Poor spinal health can lead to so many other complications (physically, mentally and socially), so a focus on maintaining spinal health is important.

Unfortunately, most of us do not think to care for our spines until there is a problem, such as a “thrown out” back or a “cricked” neck. However, just like our teeth, the spine requires regular attention. The concept of spinal hygiene exists just like dental hygiene.

The spine can be thought of as the canal to everything in our bodies – the moving bones of the spine protect the vulnerable communication pathways of the spinal cord and nerve roots. If the nervous system is impaired through dysfunction in the spine, it can cause malfunction of the systems and organs throughout the body.

CHIROPRACTIC

A WHOLE BODY, BIG PICTURE APPROACH TO HEALTH

Chiropractic is the science of locating problems in the spine, the art of reducing their impact to the nervous system, and a philosophy of natural health care based on your inborn potential to be healthy.

When under the proper control of your nervous system, all the cells, tissue, and organs of your body are designed to resist disease and ill health. The chiropractic approach to better health is to locate and help reduce interferences to your natural state of being healthy.

Common interferences to the nervous system occur between some of the twenty four moving bones of the spinal column. A loss of normal motion or position of these bones can irritate or impair the function of the nervous system. This can disrupt the transmission of controlling nerve impulses. With improved spinal function people often report improved organ and system function. Your chiropractor can help remove any interference that may be impairing normal health.

Through specialist, drug-free spinal healthcare, expertise in the diagnosis and management of spinal health, and the provision of expert advice, chiropractors can play an important part in helping Australians lead and maintain healthy lives.

THE BIG PICTURE

Since the primary focus of your care is improved nervous system function, chiropractic can have a positive effect on many health conditions not normally thought of as "back" problems.

Over 215,000 Australians visit chiropractors each week²¹ for a diverse range of health reasons. More and more Australians are turning to chiropractic care and are choosing a path to overall wellness that forgoes the use of drugs or invasive surgery.

HOW CAN MY LOCAL CHIROPRACTOR HELP ME ACHIEVE A HEALTHY LIFE?

While many can identify a strong link between chiropractic and back pain, chiropractors, through their extensive five-year university training and expert care, can help identify the links between back pain and an individual's potential to be well. **A healthy spine leads to a healthy life.**

While a central focus of chiropractic care, spinal adjustments are just one aspect of a chiropractors' expertise. Chiropractors offer something much more – expertise in the diagnosis and management of spinal health related problems.

This includes understanding the vast mechanisms of the spine and the body as a whole, as well as diagnosis, treatment, and coordination of the treatment of other members of the healthcare team. Through their five-year university training, chiropractors are experts in patient management – helping patients not only get to the cause of the pain, but maintain their spinal health – whether that means providing chiropractic adjustments, exercises, lifestyle advice, and education regarding the “big picture”.

Work stressors, poor diet and incorrect sleeping positions can greatly affect the spine.



What is a chiropractic adjustment?

A chiropractic adjustment is the skill of using a specific force in a precise direction, applied to a joint that is fixated, “locked up”, or not moving properly. This adds motion to the joint, helping the joints to gradually regain more normal motion and function.

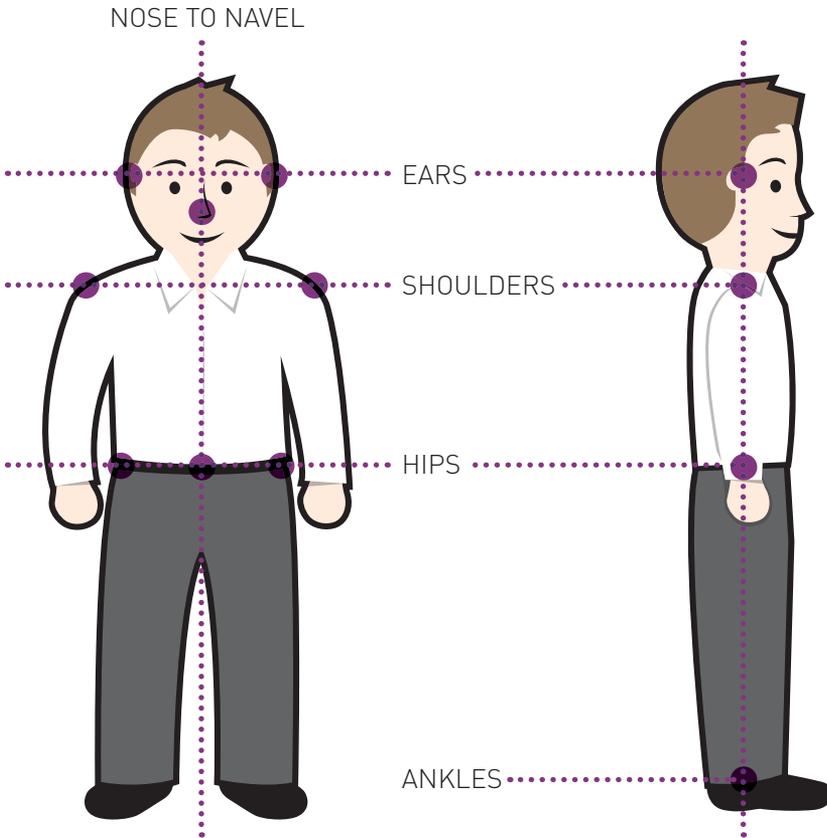
The purpose of this safe and natural procedure is to permit improved spinal function, improved nervous system function, and improved health.

There are many ways to adjust the spine. Usually the chiropractor's hands or a specially designed instrument delivers a brief, specific and highly-accurate thrust. Some adjusting methods are quick, whereas others require a slow, constant or indirect pressure.

After years of university training and clinical experience, each chiropractor becomes highly skilled in the delivery of a variety of adjusting approaches.

POSTURE CHECK

You can do this simple point check in front of a full-sized mirror, or get your partner or friend to do it for you. Imbalance of body posture can be a sign of imbalance in the spine. If you see any imbalance, it is important to see your local chiropractor and get it checked out.



CAUSES OF BACK PAIN— BEYOND THE “SLIPPED DISC”: THE BIGGER PICTURE

While many back pain sufferers who turn to prescription and over-the-counter drugs may experience short term relief, they will not address the underlying structural problems and ‘big picture’ lifestyle factors including:

Poor posture, ergonomics and seating issues	Creates strain on the mechanics of the spine, loads the joints poorly, creates aberrant feedback signals to the brain and wears joints prematurely (like uncorrected bad wheel alignment!).
Lack of exercise	Creates static tissue – for life to sustain it needs circulation of blood which carries good nutrition, removes wastes and restores and replenishes.
Smoking	Directly poisons the tissues of the body, requires extended effort by the body to remove the wastes, prematurely ages and destroys body functions.
Poor nutrition	Fosters poor quality tissue – whether that is bone, ligament, or muscle. Vessels can all effectively decay and necroses without ideal nutrition.
Muscular injury	The muscles support and move the bony skeleton. When they are injured they stop correct mechanics, allow irritation of nerve tissue, and have strong pain fibres which send muscle pain messages to the brain.
Ligament injury	The binding tissue that holds the skeleton together like sellotape. When injured, they elicit pain messages and also foster instability of the spine.
Low self-esteem	Can result in shallow breathing which effects posture, leading to poor oxygenation of the muscles and ligaments—all major contributors to back pain.

LIFESTYLE DECISIONS

A greater awareness of the lifestyle decisions we make as individuals is an important step towards achieving overall wellness. By changing the way you think about back pain (beyond “slipped discs”), into a more lifestyle-oriented framework (the “big picture”), you can aim to foster positive outcomes in other areas of your health.

For example, when thinking of back pain, not many people would consider how what we eat affects our spinal health. Empowerment over diet can help to prevent back pain and promote spinal health. Some studies have reported a link between obesity and low back pain.²²⁻²⁴ Excessive body weight can also have ill effects on the spine caused by excessive weight bearing.^{25,26} Avoiding exercise can result in an increased chance of obesity and cardiovascular problems.

In addition, many individuals view back pain as a condition that must be put up with. This can lead to avoiding exercise and physical activity, adverse affects to mental health (including depression), and dissatisfaction in the workplace through reduced productivity.

Musculoskeletal conditions, such as back pain, were the third highest health expenditure in Australia behind nervous system disorders and cardiovascular disease in 2001.²⁷ A greater awareness on prevention of musculoskeletal conditions – such as back pain – and long-term maintenance of spinal health could also potentially curb the incidence of nervous system disorders and cardiovascular disease.

Adverse affects to mental health can impact on social relationships, and job dissatisfaction can impact on overall quality of life. Low self-esteem can affect the way we feel about our bodies, including how we carry ourselves. Poor posture places strain on the spine, thereby leading to potential back pain and poor spinal health.

THE LIFESTYLE DECISIONS YOU MAKE AFFECT YOUR SPINAL HEALTH

For example, over the past few decades, evidence has been found of possible associations between smoking and back pain,^{28,29} with smokers appearing to have more episodes of back pain than non-smokers.³⁰

RISK FACTORS

THE BIG PICTURE

Risk factors for occurrence and chronicity of low back pain:³¹

Risk Factors	Occurrence	Chronicity
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age• Physical fitness• Weakness of back and abdominal muscles• Smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obesity• Low educational level• High levels of pain and disability
Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress• Anxiety• Negative mood or emotions• Poor cognitive functioning• Pain behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distress• Depressive mood• Somatisation
Occupational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manual material handling• Bending and twisting• Whole body vibration• Job dissatisfaction• Monotonous tasks• Poor relationships and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job dissatisfaction• Unavailability of light duty on return to work• Job requirement of lifting for three quarters of the day

By discovering a healthy alternative and taking control over your lifestyle decisions, the above risk factors can be managed or avoided. Your local chiropractor is expertly qualified to help you achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

JUST HOW EFFECTIVE IS CHIROPRACTIC CARE FOR BACK PAIN?

Chiropractic is a highly effective, safe and drug-free approach to spinal health care. Because chiropractic addresses the underlying (mechanical and neurological) problems in the spine and body, it is extremely effective in reducing the pain and symptoms associated with a poorly functioning spine.

- A national survey on back pain released in Canada, is one of many studies that has reported that patients increasingly choose and prefer chiropractic care for the common and disabling complaint of back pain. Chiropractic was the most popular choice for those who consulted a healthcare practitioner for their back pain, and also received a much higher patient satisfaction level than other treatment approaches.³²
- Many chiropractic patients with relatively long-lasting or recurring back pain feel improvement shortly after starting chiropractic treatment.³³
- Bronfort et al³⁴ found no treatment superior to manipulation and concluded that manipulation is a viable treatment option for acute and chronic lower back pain.
- Meade^{35,36} contrasted spinal manipulation and hospital care, finding greater benefit for the manipulation group over both short and long term periods.
- There was a positive, clinically important effect of the number of chiropractic treatments for chronic low-back pain on pain intensity and disability at 4 weeks. Relief was substantial for patients receiving care 3 to 4 times per week for 3 weeks.³⁷
- Chiropractic spinal manipulation is a safe and effective spine pain treatment. It reduces pain, decreases medication, rapidly advances physical therapy, and requires very few passive forms of treatment, such as bed rest.³⁸
- The United Kingdom's 1996 national clinical practice guidelines and evidence review states: "Within the first 6 weeks of acute or recurrent low back pain, manipulation provides better short-term improvement in pain and activity levels and higher patient satisfaction than the treatments to which it has been compared" and "the risks of manipulation for low back pain are very low, provided patients are selected and assessed properly and it is carried out by a trained practitioner."³⁹

IS CHIROPRACTIC CARE SAFE?

In relation to the treatment of neck and back pain, studies have shown that a course of chiropractic care was 250 times safer than a course of anti-inflammatory drugs.⁴⁰

Chiropractors use skill, not force or strength to conduct safe, effective adjustments.

Chiropractic care is a natural approach to better health that is proven, safe and effective. Please feel free to discuss this matter with your local chiropractor.

WHAT TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS DO CHIROPRACTORS RECEIVE?

Today's chiropractor is a highly educated professional. Chiropractic training in Australia involves five year courses at Sydney's Macquarie University, Melbourne's RMIT University and Perth's Murdoch University. Many Australian chiropractors received similar education in the US, Europe or New Zealand.

These courses are of similar length and depth as medical courses, but focus on promoting healthier lifestyles via better body function, rather than on drugs and surgery. Accordingly, chiropractic education involves a special emphasis on anatomy, physiology, pathology, neurology, biomechanics, X-ray, spinal adjusting techniques and related subjects.

After entering practice, all CAA chiropractors must complete continuing professional development courses and seminars to upgrade and improve their skills and to stay current on the latest scientific research.

IS CHIROPRACTIC CARE APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN?

Yes, chiropractic care is remarkably safe for children. Many childhood health complaints that are brushed off as "growing pains" can often be traced to the spine. Regular chiropractic checkups can identify these problems and help avoid many of the health complaints seen later in adults. Naturally, chiropractic adjusting procedures are modified to a child's spine, particularly babies'. More and more families are choosing to include chiropractic as a normal part of their families' health care regime.

IS CHIROPRACTIC CARE APPROPRIATE FOR OVER 55'S?

Yes - more and more people are consulting chiropractors, especially in their later years. With growing concerns about over-medication and the side effects of combining various prescription drugs, safe, natural chiropractic care is growing in popularity.

HOW LONG WILL I NEED CHIROPRACTIC CARE?

Spinal problems, neglected since early childhood, may require ongoing supportive care for optimum spinal function. Most patients find that periodic chiropractic checkups help keep them in tip-top shape. Those who are active, have stressful lives, or want to be their very best, find that a schedule of preventative visits are helpful in the maintenance of good health and for fostering wellness.

Some patients seek chiropractic care only when their ache or pain becomes unbearable. While this style of "crisis management" is usually more costly and time consuming, chiropractors stand ready to help all patients, regardless of their health goals.

DO I NEED A REFERRAL FROM A GP TO SEE A CHIROPRACTOR?

Chiropractors are primary contact, primary healthcare practitioners – as such, no form of referral is required as a prerequisite to visit a chiropractor.

FOOTNOTES: Visit www.chiropractors.asn.au for a full list of research references.



For more information on chiropractic, back pain, and the “big picture” speak to your local CAA chiropractor or contact the Chiropractors’ Association of Australia.

TOLL FREE: 1800 075 003 | www.chiropractors.asn.au