

Children and Chiropractic -- Where Do I Start?

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It has been said that the majority of subluxations and spinal distortions are present before the age of 11. There is no better place to start removing subluxations and allowing for the full expression of innate intelligence than with children.

Children respond quickly and dramatically to chiropractic care. A children's practice can be extremely rewarding if it is managed properly. Here are some special considerations for developing the pediatric portion of your practice.

A successful pediatric practice requires you to be well grounded in chiropractic philosophy. Removing pressure from the nervous system allows the body to heal, grow, and develop. It's important that you transfer this philosophy to the parents so they don't rush off to the medicine cabinet, but allow the child's body time to heal. Children, however, accept chiropractic in its purest form. They get the big idea! The doctor should remember that most eardrums don't rupture, most fevers don't lead to convulsions, and most runny noses don't turn into pneumonia.

Yes, children do get sick in the middle of the night. Encourage parents to call you. If they can't get you they will get the medical doctor. If necessary, have them bring the child to your home for treatment.

Make your office a place for kids. Have the books *Land of Health*, *Dotty Daff*, *Crooked Giraffe*, and *Jeff and Linda Visit the Chiropractor*, in your reception room. Treatment rooms should be stocked with stickers, balloons, and/or rings (all available through Share). There should be teddy-bears or dolls in the treatment rooms for demonstrating adjustments.

As with any patient, follow your normal procedure of consultation, examination, x-rays, report of findings, and re-examination; but gear these to children. Most importantly, relate to the child. The child is the patient. Talk directly to the child (mom or dad will fill in the blanks). Don't wear your white jacket, and let the child know what you are going to do and not do -- we don't give shots here!

Consultation should include detailed history of birth, drugs, forceps, length of labor, and breast or bottle fed.

Examination is made easier with T-shirts that open down the back, and shorts. Again let them know there won't be any shots and if anything hurts, tell you. Do a show-and-tell examination, talking with the child. Include posture and gait analysis shown to both the parents and the child.

Full spine x-rays should be considered since most children's problems have a postural component.

Kids relate to pictures. Use x-rays and easy to understand charts like *NeuroPatholator* for reports.

Treatment should be gentle and specific. Give the child some control. Some children don't like the noise of osseous adjusting. Be flexible. Give the child responsibility for exercise and diet. You will get the best compliance to exercises if they involve a sports activity such as soccer for low back,

basketball, or swimming for upper back strengthening.

Finally, re-exams and re-x-rays are important to confirm the child's spine is stable. Remember this is the spine that will grow and develop into an adult spine.

Treat the patient like the most important person in the world. Make going to your office an enjoyable, educational, and rewarding experience, and you will have lifetime chiropractic patients.

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