

Welcoming Children Into Your Office

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Close your eyes for a moment and think about the children you have in your practice now. Imagine them as adults, bringing their children in for chiropractic care! How exciting would that be? Now it's true that not all chiropractors feel comfortable adjusting children; but for those who do or are considering treating children, here are some ideas on ways to invite them into your practice:

- Start by encouraging pregnant women to get adjusted regularly during their pregnancy as well as afterward.
- Provide brochures in your office that let people know children can benefit from receiving chiropractic care.
- Create a children's corner with a basket of toys (be sure all toys are safe and clean). Avoid making this corner behind a door that could open up and possibly injure a small child.
- Maintain a special intake form that focuses on pediatric issues.
- Post testimonials from parents, stating the conditions their children had when brought to your office and the great results they have experienced with chiropractic care.
- Provide materials such as chiropractic coloring books, washable crayons and puzzles available for older children. Also provide a small television with a DVD or VHS player, so the children can watch movies that promote quiet listening and are age-appropriate. I believe there are chiropractic videos available for children, too.
- Create a special bulletin board with pictures of the children getting their first adjustments.
- One of my clients (Dr. Mary Reimer) has a wizard painted on a hallway wall near the new-patient exam room. The wizard has a wand that is casting stars over the entire wall. When a child comes into the practice, she takes a digital picture of their face and puts it on a star. The kids love seeing their pictures up there and, there are even a few "older children" (adults) who have managed to get their faces on a star, too.
- Provide information about immunizations. Patricia Gayman, DC, has a booklet titled "Making an Informed Choice: Immunization - The Other Side" that can be displayed in the office or given to expecting or new parents.
- Make sure your bases are covered: Always have the parent/guardian sign a consent form to treat a minor.
- Participate in the "Kids Day America/International" program. It is a great program that will let you tell the world about the services you offer. The Web site is www.childrenswellness.com.
- Your chiropractic assistant needs to be aware that their job description may include baby-sitting. Be sure the prospective CA is child-friendly before hiring them.
- If you have a child and their school has a career day, go and give a presentation on chiropractic.
- If a patient calls to reschedule an appointment because their child is sick, let them know you would be happy to check their child as well the next time the patient comes into the office for an adjustment.
- When the local schools do scoliosis screening, be the one to do them.
- When school starts, hold a backpack education workshop, either in your office or at local schools.
- Place a notice of special events in your local community newspaper; don't forget to include your picture.

Also don't forget that in some cases, you are the doctor of last resort. Recently, I heard Gerard Clum, DC (president of Life Chiropractic College West) tell his personal chiropractic story about how, as a child, he had serious eye problems. He had been to medical doctors who told him he might lose his sight. Finally, his parents took him to a chiropractor who adjusted him; and thanks to the healing hands of the chiropractor, he did not lose his sight. When I heard Dr. Clum's story, I was brought to tears by the power we have to treat patients and help them to experience miracles.

Additionally, remember that some children are very afraid of doctors. When they come to your office, they may not want you to touch them. The first several visits may be nothing more than getting to know one another, until you have won their trust. Be patient - the rewards are incredible and building trust is a big part of the healing process.

Finally on a personal note, every year I have to fill out an "emergency contacts card" for my daughter's school. Inevitably, there is a question that asks who her doctor is, and my answer is always her chiropractor. I don't even remember the last time she saw a medical doctor. She has been under regular chiropractic care since the day she left the hospital. If she has any pain, a cold or subluxation, she asks to go to the chiropractor. She has never been immunized and she gets adjusted every three weeks without fail. She is a walking, talking example of the benefits of lifelong chiropractic care; and she will be a chiropractic patient for life.

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