

# Why Young People Need Chiropractic Now More Than Ever

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According to a [recent study](#) published in *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders*,<sup>1</sup> "It is now widely acknowledged that neck pain (NP), mid back pain (MBP), and low back pain (LBP) (spinal pain) start early in life and that the lifetime prevalence increases rapidly during adolescence to reach adult levels at the age of 18."

The study notes that by age 11, "the lifetime prevalence of spinal pain was 86%." The authors also found that "the two-year incidence of spinal pain varied between 40% and 60% across the physical locations. Progression of pain from one to more locations and from infrequent to more frequent was common over the two-year period."

These findings strongly support the importance of chiropractic care for children and teenagers. But there is another reason why you need to be seeing the children in the families you serve; it has to do with your wellness philosophy.

## A Dangerous Time for Teens

If you are the parent of a teenager, you are familiar with the risks inherent in "coming of age." If not, maybe you can remember back a few years. Many studies have shown that teens are particularly susceptible to abusing alcohol and drugs:

- At least half of all high-school students consume alcohol.<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately 4,500 underage drinkers die each year,<sup>3</sup> with many thousands visiting emergency rooms for alcohol-related illnesses and injuries.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 2.1 million teens abuse prescription drugs annually, with Vicodin and Oxycontin the most commonly abused.<sup>5</sup>
- Twelve percent of teenage boys and 8 percent of teenage girls report using non-medical analgesics at least once in the past 12 months.<sup>6</sup>

With so many adults making poor health and lifestyle choices, it is reasonable to assume many teens fall into the same traps. As the parent of two teens highly involved in sports, I have been under the misconception that participation in soccer will reduce the likelihood my children will be exposed to alcohol and recreational drug use. Sadly, this is not the case.

In fact, according to the last study [referenced above](#), "Male athletes used alcohol, marijuana, and prescription pain relievers more frequently than noncompetitors" and "Female athletes used substances more frequently than noncompetitors."<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that the drugs most used by teens are not the typical street drugs you might

imagine. These days, they are taking drugs like methadone, opium, morphine and codeine, under the brand names of Demerol, Vicodin, Oxycontin and Percocet.

### An Opportunity to Teach Younger Patients the Wellness Lifestyle

While the medical community is happy to prescribe these drugs to student athletes in pain, there is generally no one to talk with them about the realities of prescription drug abuse. This is where you, as a doctor of chiropractic, can make a big difference in the life of a young person.

Education is an important aspect of helping children make the right choices later in life. Having short, contextual discussions with younger patients can help them steer clear of alcohol and drugs as they reach adolescence. They can learn a wellness philosophy as the healthy way to live.

Similar discussion with your teenage patients is even more important. By age 18, most will have been drinking at some level. More than one-third will have smoked marijuana in the past year, with over a quarter abusing prescription drugs. As the research suggests, a large percentage of these are athletes.

You could very well be the only health care provider to give them the facts about the harm they are doing to their bodies. This is a message that should resonate especially well with athletes, who place great pride on their ability to stay fit and perform well.

Young people need chiropractic care *and* a wellness philosophy that will help them shape their lifestyles. Remember, the term *doctor* is Latin for *teacher*. Be a great *doctor* of chiropractic.

### References

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