

The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

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The Importance of a Chiropractic Spinal Screening

Presented by:

Introduction

Your spine is a column of 24 bones, or vertebrae that surrounds and protects your spinal cord and is held together by muscles, tendons and ligaments. Discs between and joints at the back of your vertebrae allow your spine to flex, twist and extend. Your body's framework, including your spine, allows for a broad range of movement and function. Maintaining excellent spine health and function is critical to ensuring proper, pain-free range of motion throughout your lifespan. A chiropractor may use spinal and postural screenings as a way to gather important health information about your body and better assess your specific care needs to help you avoid unnecessary musculoskeletal problems.

What is a Chiropractic Spinal Screening?

A chiropractic spinal screening often involves several key assessment procedures and is designed as a step-by-step process to determine if you have problems or conditions that may benefit from chiropractic care. Chiropractic screenings are often performed at health fairs or other events and they range in duration and complexity, depending on the comprehensiveness of the screening protocol. The goal of a chiropractic spinal screening is to let you know if there are any musculoskeletal problems in your joints or soft tissues that could be helped with joint manipulation, soft tissue work or other chiropractic treatment methods.

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How Are Spinal Screenings Performed?

Every chiropractor has a unique spinal screening procedure but in most cases a chiropractic spinal screening will involve at least one of the following to assess your spine health and function: spinal range of motion tests, palpation of the muscles that support or act on your spine or an evaluation of your intervertebral joint range of motion. These procedures assess the functional health of your spine, the tone and balance of your back and neck muscles and areas of joint fixation or restriction, respectively.



Exercise of the Week

Lumbar stabilization (stage 1) Plank Position

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
(Consult your Chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise)

Start: Lie down on stomach. Then, begin by propping upper body up onto elbows/forearms, with hands together in prayer position. Engage inner abdominal muscles by bringing belly button inward.

Exercise: Keeping spine steady, lift hips up off floor, keeping knees on floor. You should be able to draw an imaginary straight line from knees to shoulders. Be particularly aware of keeping abdominal muscles contracted. (Position #1) If this feels easy, lift knees off floor as well, forming a straight line from ankles to shoulders. (Position #2) Balance and hold in either position for 10-60 seconds. Be aware of abdominal muscles, and avoid straining lower back. Perform 3-5 sets of this exercise.



Another helpful spinal screening tool used by many chiropractors is a postural assessment. Your chiropractor may use simple observation or a spinal analysis machine to evaluate your standing posture and the postural demands on your spine. Some chiropractors may also use chair massage to get a better sense of any problem areas in your spinal joints and soft tissues.

Who Needs a Spinal Screening?

Spinal screenings are particularly important in children and early teens, as this is a period of rapid growth and a time when scoliosis - a sideways curve of the spine - often appears. Early detection of scoliosis may be helpful in treating this problem or preventing a progression of the curve. According to a 2008 case study published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, chiropractic treatment was associated with a decrease in the degree of curvature of adolescent idiopathic (i.e., of unknown cause) scoliosis in this particular case and chiropractic manipulative therapy (among other chiropractic treatment methods) may reduce the need for surgery in patients with this problem.¹ Another study, published in the journal *Spine*, reports that spinal screening procedures do appear to be effective in reducing the need for surgical intervention in scoliosis patients.²

Chiropractic spinal screenings can benefit people of all ages and occupations. Office workers, construction workers and expecting mothers are just a few of the many types of people who experience unique demands on the spine and its supporting tissues but almost everybody can benefit from an assessment of spine health and function. A spinal screening may help

detect potential problem areas even before you notice any symptom, and it can help prevent chronic back and neck pain by identifying the true underlying cause of your musculoskeletal problem.



What Happens After the Spinal Screening?

After your spinal screening, the chiropractor will present his or her findings to you and make helpful suggestions about how chiropractic care can help you achieve optimal spine health and general well-being. This is an excellent time to ask the chiropractor about upcoming health talks he or she is offering and what an initial visit to his or her clinic entails.



Disclaimer: Information contained in The Wellness Express™ newsletter is for educational and general purposes only and is designed to assist you in making informed decisions about your health. Any information contained herein is not intended to substitute advice from your physician or other healthcare professional.

Quote to Inspire

“To succeed in life you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone”

Reba McEntire

References and Sources:

1. Chen KC, Chiu EHH. Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis treated by spinal manipulation: A case study. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 2008. Jul; 14(6): 749-751.
2. Bunnell WP. Outcome of spinal screening. *Spine*. 1993; 18(12): 1572-1580.



Writer: Marty Hughes, DC
Design: Elena Zhukova
Graphics: Maria Camille Almirañez
Production: Mike Talarico