

Chiropractic and Athletes

Written by Keith Wassung

Thursday, 01 September 2005 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 27 March 2014 09:43

Athletes have been benefiting from Chiropractic care for many years; however, it has only recently been receiving attention from the media. Athletes of all types, from the weekend warrior to the world-class athlete, utilize Chiropractic because it is a drug-free way to better health and performance.

Chiropractic adjustments help ensure that the body functions as efficiently as possible, which can maximize healing and recovery from all types of injuries.



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“I would estimate that in excess of 90% of all world-class athletes use Chiropractic care to prevent injuries and to increase their performance potential.” Sean Atkins, PhD, Exercise Physiologist

The science of Chiropractic is founded on the premise that a proper nerve supply is essential to controlling and regulating the functioning of the human body.

The nervous system controls every activity in the body by sending and receiving nerve messages and is protected by the bones of the spine called vertebrae. When the spine is in its optimal structural position, the nerves are protected and optimal communication exists between the central nervous system and the rest of the body. The vertebra of the spine are susceptible

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to certain stresses and forces, which can cause them to lose their proper position.

These minor misalignments of the spine, which are known as “vertebral subluxations,” cause nerve interference and weaken the entire structure of the spine. Athletic training can often jar and misalign the spinal column, because the spine is at the center of the body. Impact to the legs, feet, head, shoulders and torso often radiates to the spine.

Doctors of Chiropractic detect and correct vertebral subluxations by physically adjusting the spine. This restores the spine and nervous system to a more optimal level of function, which maximizes the body’s performance and healing potential.

Anyone who engages in athletics can benefit from regular Chiropractic checkups to ensure that their spine is balanced and free from structural stress and subluxations. When the spinal column is brought into balance and alignment, the body’s nervous system and body biomechanics (movement and posture) are maximized.

“Changes in the optimal spinal position produce spinal pathologies and loss of function. Spinal pathologies destroy joint reflexes, arc fibers and cause nerve impedance.” [2](#)

“Postural strength and coordination are essential for injury prevention and sports performance.” [3](#)

Thomas Harris, MD, *The Sports Medicine Guide*

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“Posture affects and moderates every physiological function, from breathing to nervous system function, and despite the considerable evidence that posture affects physiology and function, the significant influence of posture on health is not addressed by most physicians.” [4](#)

American Journal of Pain Management

Chiropractic’s focus on the nervous system and postural biomechanics allows the body to function properly and to heal itself. The healing process always occurs from within the body, but research has shown that Chiropractic has an amazing potential to assist the body in the recovery process.

“The quality of healing is directly proportional to the functional capability of the nervous system to send and receive nerve messages.” [8](#)

Journal of Neurological Science

More sports-related non-fatal injuries are treated in hospital emergency departments than any other type of unintentional injury. Standard medical procedures may be necessary when an athlete is injured. Traditional medical professionals specialize in the management and care of fractures, dislocations, lacerations and damaged tendons and ligaments. However, many athletes leave the hospital with as much spinal stress (subluxations) as they were suffering from when they entered.

Doctors of Chiropractic focus on the entire structure of the body rather than just the obviously injured part. For this reason, they can often detect and help to prevent an injury that might normally be overlooked or ignored.

Because Doctors of Chiropractic are experts in the field of human biomechanics, they are very

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aware of proper posture and movement. By observing an athlete in action, a Chiropractor can often detect and prevent a structural problem that can lead to injury or poor performance. Athletic injuries are often caused by improper biomechanics or muscle imbalances within the spine.

“Chiropractic has helped thousands of athletes, professional and amateur, overcome an injury without resorting to surgery.” [9](#)

Sports Training and Performance

Athletes have also discovered that Chiropractic care allows them to achieve an optimal level of performance when training and competing in their respective sporting event. A proper biomechanical structure allows athletes to achieve and maintain their optimal level of performance—safely and naturally. There is a growing body of research and case studies which clearly show the relationship between Chiropractic care and athletic performance.

A Canadian research team included Chiropractic care in the rehabilitation program of sixteen injured female long distance runners. Not only did these runners recover quickly, seven of them actually scored “personal best” performances while under Chiropractic care. [10](#)

The extent of Chiropractic’s “winning edge” was tested on fifty athletes who were divided into a control group and a group which added Chiropractic care to their usual training procedures. After six weeks, the group under Chiropractic care scored significantly better on standard tests of athletic ability. When tested on their reaction time, the control group demonstrated less than one percent improvement, while the Chiropractic group achieved reaction times more than eighteen percent faster than their initial scores. [11](#)

A landmark research effort from the New Zealand School of Chiropractic and the University of Auckland, has evaluated the effects Chiropractic adjustments may have on reaction times. Two

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groups were tested to study variations in reaction times: one group received spinal adjustments, while the other group, only receiving a short period of rest, acted as a control group for comparison.

There was a marked improvement for the group that received an adjustment over the group that got nothing but rest. The group that got only a rest period did show an average decrease in reaction time: 58 milliseconds, an 8% faster reaction time. The group that received the Chiropractic adjustment showed a decrease in reaction time of 97 milliseconds, representing a 14.8% faster reaction time. [12](#)

The implications for these findings are far reaching for any activity in the “game of life,” and the data can objectively support anecdotal evidence of enhanced athletic performance under Chiropractic care. The ability to react more quickly to any of the demands life can impose provides added performance enhancement benefits for athletes, who rely on optimum reaction reflexes to perform at their maximum competitive capacity. Field-based practice experiences indicate that Chiropractic care appears to both enhance an athlete’s ability to perform and to recover from injuries when they occur; this study provides objective evidence that a vital component of athletic performance—rapid reaction time—is markedly improved through the Chiropractic adjustment.

Children and Sports

It is estimated that 30 million children now participate in organized sports including soccer, football, swimming, gymnastics, hockey, skating and baseball. Correspondingly, as participation increases, injuries increase. Sports injuries to young people now exceed the occurrence of infectious disease. [13](#)

More than 700,000 children under the age of 15 are taken to the hospital emergency room for treatment of sports-related injuries. In fact, children between the ages 11-15 account for 55% of all sports-related injuries that require hospitalization. [14](#)

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Sports and recreational activities account for 4.3 million or 36% of all injuries to children in the United States. [15](#)

American Family Physician

The increase in emergency-related injuries for children includes well-known injuries such as broken arms and twisted ankles—these injuries are certainly not new. What is new, however, are the types of children's sports injuries seldom seen in past generations. They are overuse injuries caused by small, but repetitive injuries to the body's tissues, joints and spinal columns resulting in chronic health conditions.

Chiropractic adjustments for children of all ages are of tremendous benefit for the treatment and prevention of injuries and to maximize performance potential.

Chiropractic's focus on the spine and nervous system is also important for children, since it is their nervous system which controls their entire growth and development.

This fall as your child returns to school and participates in the many athletic opportunities offered, be sure to follow the example of the professionals and have his/her spine checked regularly, both after sporting events to minimize the effects of trauma, and before the competitions to enhance athletic performance.

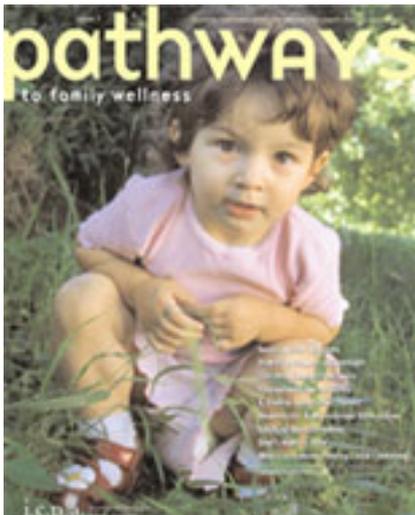
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This article appeared in [Pathways to Family Wellness](#) magazine, Issue #07.
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