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Proactive, Preventive Chiropractic Care is a Family Affair

by Risa Sloves, DC

As parents search for proactive lifestyle habits that will nurture their children's health and family, chiropractic care is leading the way. Chiropractic awareness is shifting from being an intervention for pain relief toward a more proactive, wellness-oriented healthcare choice. Dr. Candice Pert, a recognized leader in the field of psychoneuroimmunology, credits chiropractic as having a "significant effect on maximizing immunity via maintenance of a healthy nervous system," and Dr. Ronald Pero, Ph.D., chief of cancer prevention research at New York's Preventative Medicine Institute, determined that chiropractic patients had a 200 percent greater immune competence than people that had no chiropractic care. Pero, who has published more than 160 papers in peer-reviewed journals, firmly believes, "Chiropractic care optimizes whatever genetic abilities an individual has to resist disease."

There are chiropractic physicians that specialize in treating pregnant mothers, infants, children and families. Chiropractic adjustments for babies and children differ significantly from those of adults. Also, more and more women are choosing the non-invasive approach of chiropractic care to prepare their spine and nervous system for pregnancy and to afford a better chance for a natural delivery.

The enormous benefits of chiropractic care involve relatively simple anatomical concepts to grasp. Because the brain and nervous system control

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the function of every cell, tissue and organ of the body (and an unborn baby's body) it is vitally important for the nervous system to operate at 100 percent efficiency for optimal health. The spine protects the spinal cord, so when a spinal bone shifts out of normal alignment, it may produce abnormal motion and damaging pressure on spinal nerves. This condition is known as vertebral subluxation and if present, may interrupt the vital nerve flow within the body and to a gestating baby. Chiropractic care diagnoses and corrects subluxations that interfere with normal body function. Subluxations may not cause immediate pain, but if left uncorrected, the body's capacity for health can deteriorate and eventually contribute to disease.

Subluxations are an inherent part of pregnancy due to the hormonal and postural changes that occur in the spine and pelvis, affecting the associated joints, nerves, muscles and connective tissue. Chiropractic care focuses on gentle adjustments, either with the doctor's hands or with special adjusting instruments, to allow the joints of the spine to function properly. Studies have shown this approach to help alleviate the vast majority of common neuromusculoskeletal pregnancy symptoms: low back pain, sciatica, headaches, neck, shoulder, ribcage and arm pain, carpal tunnel syndrome and pubic pain and/or separation. Further studies have shown that chiropractic care reduces nausea and vomiting, pain during labor and delivery, mean labor time, breach presentations and Cesarean section rates, and affords fewer labor interventions and a quicker recovery.

According to infant health expert Abraham Towbin, M.D., "The birth process, even under natural and controlled conditions, is potentially traumatic." Research shows that in a normal, average vaginal delivery, there may be between 40 to 70 pounds of force exerted on a newborn's head and neck during delivery. So, even a normal delivery without any intervention can potentially strain the delicate spinal joints in a baby's neck, resulting in subluxations and nerve dysfunction. Medical research

studies have concluded that up to 80 to 90 percent of all babies have strains in these regions, and this may account for many common symptoms found in infants and children. Prominent medical researchers have stated that frequent spitting up, colic, difficulty with feeding and attachment, sleeping problems, torticollis, asthma, ear infections, nose and throat infections, generalized lowered resistance to infections and learning or behavioral problems can all be associated with stress to the neck during the birth process.

Ideally, babies should be checked and adjusted, if necessary, as soon as possible after birth to correct for spinal subluxations. Because 65 percent of a child's neurological development occurs in the first year, it is imperative to ensure a baby has every opportunity to maximize their nerve function during this critical period. Other common physical causes for vertebral subluxations during the first year include sleeping in a car seat with inadequate support of the head and neck, falls off of the bed or changing table or falls while learning to walk.

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Pediatrics, parents send their children to chiropractic physicians for many health complaints, the most common of which are symptoms of respiratory tract dysfunction, ear/nose/throat dysfunction, allergies, skin conditions, headaches, scoliosis, gastrointestinal complaints and prevention.

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