

# Chiropractic Care for Healthy Children

**Why chiropractic care for my child? His back doesn't bother him!**

*by O J Ressel, BSc, DC*

**D**octors of chiropractic hear from parents that they appreciate the importance of regular check-ups for their child's teeth, eyes and ears, but they draw a blank when it comes to a spinal check-up. Yet that could be one of the most important check-ups your child will ever have.

You might be surprised to learn that most adult problems chiropractors deal with actually have a start in childhood. For example, the "growing pains" of a 12-year-old boy can become crippling low back and leg pains in adulthood; the "jolly jumpers" used by a toddler can cause spinal curvatures (scoliosis) in the adolescent. Your child's spine is his or her lifeline. Running through it is the spinal cord containing billions of nerves that send messages and information from the brain to every part of the body and back again.

Yes, we all have our very own Internet! As long as none of these messages is interrupted, your child should have optimal function and the best health possible. If, however, there is any interference with this "information highway," the message sent by the brain will not reach the part of the body it is intended to reach. As a result the body starts to work improperly. Chiropractors call this "malfunction." It can be a serious threat to health. This interference will often affect the immune system, lower body resistance and leave your child prey to various bugs and infections.

## The Function of the Immune System

It is generally agreed that the immune system is very closely linked to the nervous system. As a matter of fact, Dr Stephen Marini, who is both an immunologist and a chiropractor and who is on staff at the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, feels that the immune system is like a "circulating nervous system." He also feels that

most diseases children get are really the result of the improper functioning of that system. This interference in your child's nervous system is what chiropractors refer to as a vertebral subluxation – small misalignments of the bones of the spine pinching delicate nerves.

## How does your baby's spine lose its natural alignment?

Vertebral subluxations have many causes. The major cause of most is actually the process of being brought into the world - birth. For an infant, it can be very stressful. Subluxations associated with birth trauma can cause hyperactivity, lowered resistance, ear infections, asthma and bed-wetting, as well as signs of "central motor impairment." According to Dr Gutman, a German specialist, "a spinal check-up after birth should be obligatory."

As a matter of fact, certain hospitals in Australia are having chiropractic doctors check the infant spine immediately after delivery to ensure a healthy spine and nervous system, free from subluxations.

As babies get older, they are often subjected to some uncomfortable traditions: wearing tight diapers that do not allow proper hip development; "jolly jumpers" which place an infant in an upright position long before the spine can deal with gravity; poorly designed school desks and poor mattresses, just to name a few. Then of course there is the usual process of crawling, walking and running. As your child matures, other incidents and activities can also create vertebral subluxations. For instance, falling off a bike or down stairs, hockey, football, skateboards and rollerblades.

As an example, the so-called growing pains I mentioned earlier that children often experience in their legs have traditionally been explained away as part of childhood. Worried parents hear such nonsensical statements as

"It's nothing - they'll grow out of it," or my very favorite, "It is because they are growing." Many parents tend to buy these excuses. But when we really think about it, those explanations simply do not make any sense. After all, when did it ever hurt to grow? And why only the legs? Don't the arms also grow? Why don't they hurt?

From a chiropractic perspective, these "growing pains" are often called "sciatica" in adults. In other words, a vertebral subluxation in the low back pinching the sciatic nerve which controls the legs. These pains can also often be caused by a "functional pelvic imbalance." In simple terms, it's a subluxation of the pelvic bones which then changes the way a child walks. These pelvic imbalance subluxations can lead to the development of early scoliosis (spinal curvature), knee problems and difficulty with balance. These are often the children who are wrongly labeled as "klutzy."

If allowed to remain, subluxations are the starting point of nerve system and body malfunction. When a vertebral subluxation has existed for some time, it will eventually produce symptoms (pain is the most common) as a warning to let you know that something is simply not okay, that there is a threat to health and well-being.

One must remember that symptoms are similar to a fire alarm. They let you know that there is a fire. At this point you have a choice. You can put out the fire (correct the subluxation), or turn off the fire alarm (using medication) to make yourself feel better. Which is more logical?

Chiropractic care is for everyone who wants to experience wellness, but especially important for children. It can make a huge difference in their lives. Conditions easily corrected by chiropractic therapy at an early age are often neglected and can be carried by a child as a burden throughout a lifetime.

I firmly believe that all children should be checked by a chiropractor to ensure a normally functioning nervous system and a healthy body. For more information, or the name of a pediatric chiropractor near you, please contact the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association at 404-872-KIDS. ■

*O J Ressel practices in Burlington ON.*