

Kids First

Your Child's Checkup



Most health care decisions are generally made by moms. Mothers function on a different level than fathers when it involves the health of their families. (When was the last time dad took the kids for a dental checkup, the chiropractor, naturopath or for a haircut or new shoes?)

I want to make moms feel comfortable with their children when seeing a chiropractor. I've had phone calls from readers all over asking what is involved in a typical pediatric chiropractic examination and what they should expect.

I'll tell you!

As in any other professional health care office, there are initial forms to fill out. These are very important. They ask about mom's pregnancy, labour and delivery, medical intervention such as ultrasound, epidurals, C-section and vacuum extraction (now used instead of forceps for delivering babies: a suction cup is placed on the baby's skull and 90 to 140 lbs of force is used to deliver the child).

These procedures can lead to traumatic birth syndrome. The vast majority of chiropractic health problems found in children and adults, which may not be noticeable for years, can be traced to subluxations from a difficult delivery and can affect the function of an infant's nervous system.

The initial visit form also asks about the APGAR score—a numerical value given to the infant immediately after birth and at five minutes. The optimal score would be a "10." Anything less generally indicates birth trauma.

When the form is filled out a consultation with the doctor follows.

I really enjoy this aspect of a child's visit. I use it to gain as much information as I need to have an idea of what is causing the child's health problem. The emphasis is not so much on the symptoms the child may have but on what may be causing them.

As many children are generally not very happy seeing yet another doctor, I tend to approach this visit as play-time. The child is reassured that there are no needles or pills here and it is common for me to sit with the child on the floor or on my lap as I'm taking my notes. (I'll never grow up!)

As well, I use a small spinal model to illustrate what a subluxation does to the body.

"It turns the power off," I say and then ask, "What do you think is better, power on, or power off?"

I always get the correct answer!

The consultation is followed by an examination for which children disrobe and put on a small, child-sized gown. At our centre, all doctors have the parents do most of the examination and we guide them through it. It's important that parents actually participate in the examination so that they can feel and see what I feel and see.

I point out any signs of a possible spinal curvature starting, the manner in which the pelvis works when the child walks and how that affects the function of the knees, feet and balance. Posture and overall body "economy" is also evaluated.

Measurements of the two sides of the head are taken—they should be the same. If not, this could indicate cranial moulding—a possible result of a difficult delivery. The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) is also examined for the same reason.

A number of neurological tests are generally done to let me know how the nervous system is functioning and to detect any possible malfunction.

The child is then taken through a number of sophisticated computer scans where a scanner runs down the spine to measure the function of the two aspects of the nervous system—the autonomic (the "autopilot") and the voluntary parts.

Depending on the age of the child and the results of the various tests, an X-ray examination may be performed to provide further information on the nature of the subluxation and possible damage it may have caused.

That's it! The examination is thorough and precise.

If you have any qualms about having your children checked by a chiropractor, you don't have to. It's one of the best health care decisions you can make. ■

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