

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Michael J. Wszolek

Chiropractic for Seniors

You're never too young — or too old — to benefit from chiropractic care!

According to the White House Report on Aging, nearly half of all chiropractic patients will be over the age of 65 as “baby boomers” come of age during the next decade.

Dr. Wszolek knows that regularly scheduled chiropractic care is important for everyone — especially seniors, due to their increased rate of musculoskeletal degeneration.



This is true for seniors throughout the world. Researchers in the United Kingdom say that musculoskeletal disorders are common across Europe, adding that they can be “effectively prevented and controlled in many situations.” (*Ann Rheum Dis* 2007;66:293-301.)

Lisa Killinger of the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research, Davenport, Iowa, says that “chiropractors may be well-positioned to play an important role in health promotion, injury and disease prevention and on geriatric care teams, due to their practice style and holistic philosophy.” (*Clin Geriatr Med* 2004;20:223-35).

In fact, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research recommends chiropractic adjustments for seniors with

acute low-back pain. In addition, Killinger says the American Geriatric Society Panel Guidelines for the Management of Chronic Pain state that “non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as chiropractic, may be appropriate.”

Dr. Wszolek applauds the fact that both agencies not only recognize — but promote — the value of chiropractic care for older patients. And there’s ample proof that this dynamic demographic is getting the message.

When the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention in Palo Alto, Calif., surveyed 728 seniors, an impressive 25 percent reported relying on chiropractic care to help them prevent and mediate aches, pains and disease (*J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* 2000;55:M4-9). A trend that, like the seniors who seek chiropractic care, shows no sign of slowing down!

Read on for a sampling of the many and varied ways regularly scheduled chiropractic care with Dr. Wszolek benefits seniors.

Eases Pain Without Medication

During one 12-week study, chiropractors from 32 states and two Canadian provinces collected data on 805 patients over the age of 55. “Pain” was responsible for 72.3 percent of the

complaints — with 32.9 percent directly related to back pain.

“For 66.6 percent of subjects, a chiropractor was the only provider for their current complaint. In addition to [spinal] manipulation, most common features of care were recommendations on exercise (41.0 percent), heat or cold applications (40.8 percent) and food supplements (24.5 percent).”

Results showed a 7.3 percent drop in the use of pain medication among 19.6 percent of the patients. An *increase* in the use of pain medications, however, was noted among the 20 percent who *discontinued* chiropractic care prior to the close of the experiment (*J Am Geriatr Soc* 2000;48:534-45).

Optimizes the Spine

Chiropractors often detect **vertebral subluxations** — areas of dysfunction among the bones of the spine (vertebrae) — in seniors. This common malady is linked with an array of conditions, ranging from low-back pain and arthritis to Parkinson’s disease and hearing difficulties. Doctors of chiropractic, like Dr. Wszolek, correct vertebral subluxations with safe, gentle maneuvers known as **chiropractic adjustments**.



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Increases Motor Skills

In one recent study, researchers asked seniors in a specialized test group to use a computer mouse to move their cursors onto a target in the center of a computer screen. The researchers used a range of widths and target distances to vary the level of difficulty.



“All participants in the experimental group [those receiving chiropractic care] had significantly improved movement times following spinal adjustments compared with only one participant in the control group [those not receiving chiropractic care].”

The results demonstrated significant motor-skill improvement among those receiving chiropractic care, leading researchers to suggest that “spinal adjustments may influence motor behavior.” (*J Manipul Physiol Ther* 2006;29:257-66.)

Prevents Degenerative Diseases

Doctors of chiropractic help patients prevent age-related degenerative diseases like osteoarthritis (OA). This all-too-common condition erodes joint cartilage, nature’s “shock absorber,” designed to keep bones from grinding against each other.

Knee joints are one of this disease’s favorite targets. Restricted movement, along with increased tendon and ligament contractions, stresses joints and accelerates the progression of OA (*Fam Pract News* 2005;35:50).

Maintaining a healthy weight, however, reduces the burden placed on knee joints. “Being overweight before

the age of 40 and doing demanding physical work were both identified as risk factors for osteoarthritis of the knee.” (*J Epidemiol Community Health* 2003;57:823-30.)

Researchers have also discovered a link between knee OA and a higher instance of lumbar spine and hip OA (*Ann Rheum Dis* 2006;65:623-8). Chiropractic adjustments, on the other hand, help sufferers retain range of motion and flexibility, which reduces joint stress and slows the disease’s progression.

Encourages Lifestyle Changes

As providers of holistic health care, doctors of chiropractic routinely encourage seniors to make health-boosting lifestyle changes.

Exercise

“Although the benefits of increased physical activity and exercise are universally recognized, many older persons remain sedentary, and relatively few achieve recommended levels of activity.” (*J Am Med Dir Assoc* 2006;7:310-4.)

The solution? Get off the couch, toss the potato chips and talk with your doctor about establishing a health-boosting exercise plan that takes into consideration your current health and mobility status.

Not only does daily exercise ward off physical disease and disability, but it also prevents dementia, anxiety and depression.



Eat Right

It’s common for seniors to lose interest in food and, subsequently, become malnourished. Dehydration is another huge concern.

Overeating is also common among this demographic. Type 2 diabetes has reached epidemic proportions among seniors, fueled by low-cost, high-carbohydrate “comfort foods.” That’s why it’s important to discuss any nutritional concerns you have with your doctor of chiropractic. It’s never too late to start eating healthy!

Socialize

Rather than staying home, fight depression and isolation by staying involved in the community. Volunteer your time to help a child learn to read, start a book club, or enroll in a ballroom dancing class.

Why is socialization so important, especially for seniors? Because numerous studies show a distinct link between how patients *think* and how they *feel*.

Keep Learning

A plethora of research supports the so-called “use it or lose it” theory of cognitive decline. This theory demonstrates that mentally stimulating activities ward off Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. So take a class, learn a new skill and complete a daily crossword or Suduko puzzle.

Schedule an Appointment Today

If you are a senior, don’t let aches and pains sideline you from an active and rewarding retirement. Instead, commit to regularly scheduled chiropractic care!

For those who aren’t seniors, show the older people in your life how much they mean to you by encouraging them to schedule an appointment for a complete chiropractic checkup today. And help keep their “golden years” truly golden.

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