

Care for Disc Problems

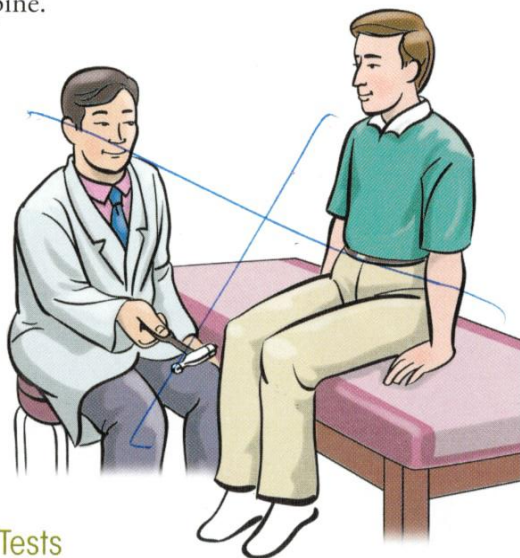
Your spine is made up of bones (vertebrae) that stack together. These bones are cushioned by pads (discs). When discs are damaged, nearby nerves can be irritated. Pain can result. Common types of disc damage include **degenerated discs** and **bulging discs**. These conditions can be caused by injury and aging. Repeated strain over time can also be a cause. Chiropractic care can improve the alignment and movement of the spine. This can decrease pressure on nerves and help relieve symptoms.

Your Chiropractic Evaluation

You're asked about your symptoms, past injuries or treatments, and overall health. You're also asked about your daily life. This includes work habits, hobbies, and exercise.

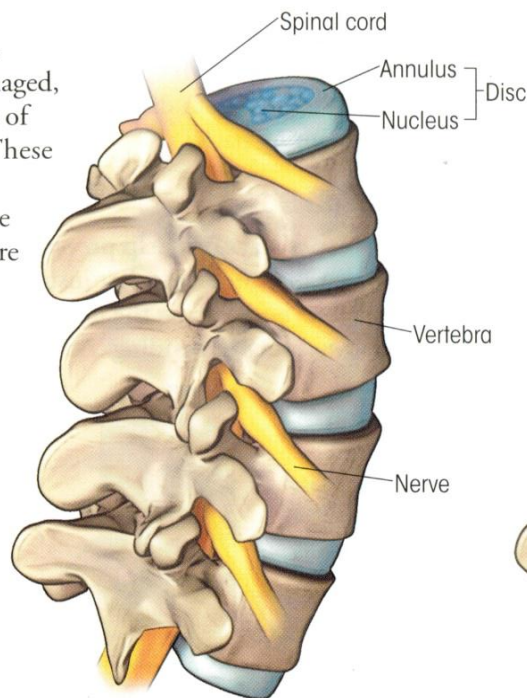
Physical Exam

Your chiropractor may check your reflexes. He or she may also ask you to walk on your heels or toes. Tests such as these can help the chiropractor detect nerve problems in your spine.

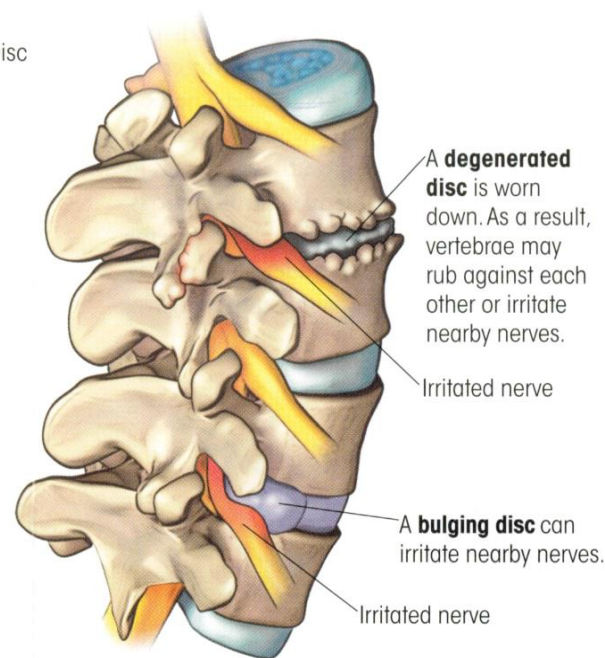


Other Tests

You may have x-rays or an MRI scan. These tests provide information about structures in the spine.



Structures of a healthy spine



A spine with disc problems

Your Treatment Plan

Your chiropractor creates a plan to care for your disc problems. This likely includes a hands-on technique called manipulation. Other treatment methods also help. In addition, you're taught ways to help relieve pain and protect your discs.

Manipulation

Manipulation (also called adjustment) helps improve alignment and flexibility in the spine and joints. During manipulation, your chiropractor carefully applies pressure to affected areas. To treat disc problems, manipulation may be done to any part of the spine. This can help decrease pressure on spinal nerves.

Other Treatments

Other treatments may be suggested. These can help reduce pain by relaxing muscles and reducing swelling. They include:

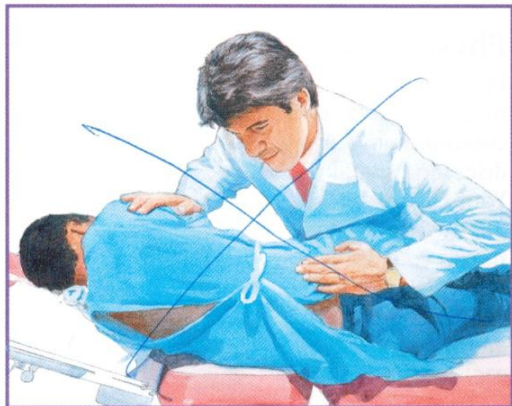
- **Trigger point therapy** to ease muscle tension.
- **Massage, ultrasound, and muscle stimulation** to relax muscles, reduce muscle spasm, and improve blood flow.
- **Traction** to realign the spine and reduce pressure on nerves.
- **Ice** to reduce swelling and **heat** to relax muscles.

How Does a Chiropractor Treat Spinal Degeneration?

Your doctor of chiropractic is trained to improve the health of your spine. Special chiropractic methods, called adjustments, can help relieve pain and slow degeneration.

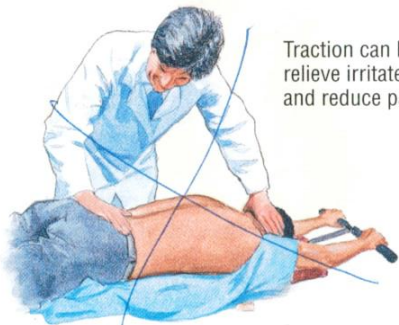
Spinal Adjustments

Your treatment depends on the cause and stage of your spinal degeneration. During an adjustment, your chiropractor gently presses on the joints in the spine to improve range of motion and relieve nerve irritation.



Related Treatment

Your chiropractor may suggest other types of treatment to relieve pain and improve range of motion. These may include traction, ice or heat, massage, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, or stretching exercises. Your chiropractor can discuss these with you.

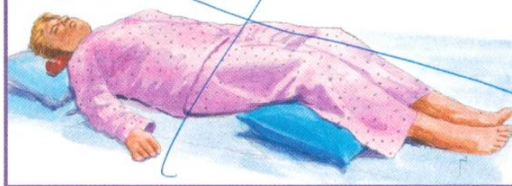


Traction can help relieve irritated nerves and reduce pain.

What Can I Do to Keep My Spine in Shape?

Always keep your spine in mind, no matter what you're doing. Exercise regularly, but limit your activities to shorter periods and avoid high-risk or high-impact sports. Eating a low-fat, low-calorie diet may also improve your health, since losing excess weight can help relieve pressure on your spine.

When you sleep on your back, place a pillow under your neck and shoulders and a small, rolled-up towel under your neck. You may also want to put a pillow or small, rolled-up towel under your knees.



Spinal Checkups

Just as you need regular dental exams, you also need regular spinal exams. Even if you don't have symptoms, chiropractic care is one of the best ways to manage or prevent spinal problems and maintain a healthier life.

Consultant:
Michael D. Pedigo, DC

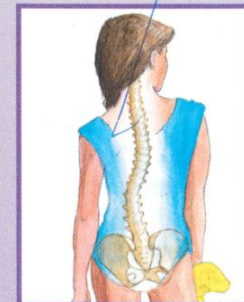
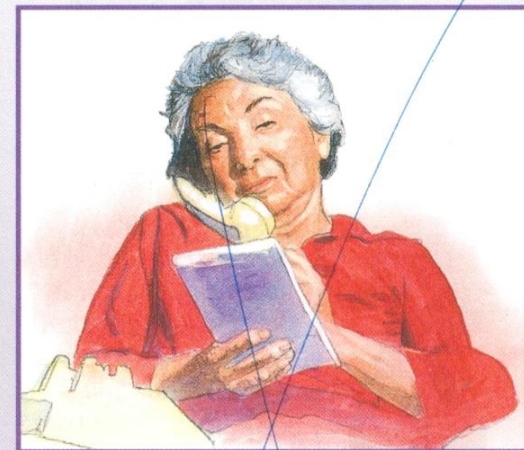
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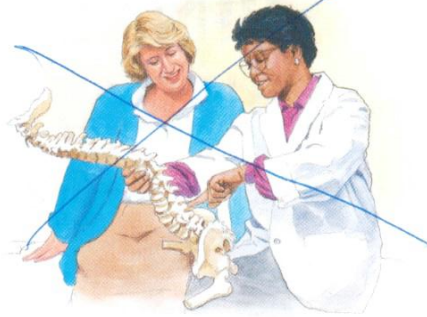

Chiropractic Care

SPINAL DEGENERATION

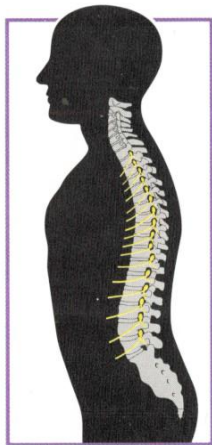


The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.

—Attributed to Thomas Edison



What Is Chiropractic Care?



Chiropractic is a natural method of healthcare that treats the causes of physical problems, such as misaligned joints and worn discs, rather than just the symptoms. Chiropractic is based on a simple but powerful premise: With a normally functioning spine and nerves and a healthy lifestyle, your

body is better able to heal itself. That's because the spinal cord, which is protected by the spine, is the main pathway of your nervous system. The nervous system controls movement, feeling, and function throughout your body.

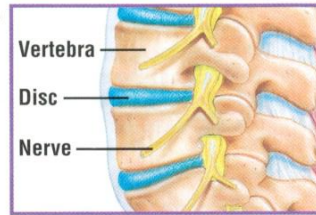
Your chiropractor has at least six years of professional training in the sciences and healthcare, leading to a doctor of chiropractic (DC) degree. He or she works to restore your health and guides you in a

What Is Spinal Degeneration?

Years of stress or overuse can cause your spine to degenerate, or wear out, early. Poor posture, repeated movements that strain the spine, injuries, an abnormal curvature, or even your lifestyle can lead to misaligned joints and worn discs. You may have pain and stiffness, or no symptoms at all.

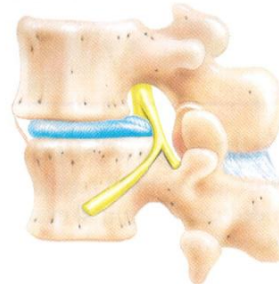
Healthy Spine

When your body weight is evenly distributed throughout your spine, the bones (**vertebrae**) and shock absorbers (**discs**) stay healthy and pain-free.



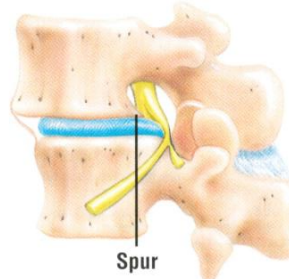
Misaligned Joint

The joint is where the vertebrae meet. When a joint is out of position, the vertebrae can't move correctly. Discs and muscles become stressed and nerves may be irritated.



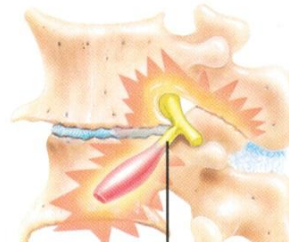
Early Degeneration

With repeated stress, a disc wears down and is less able to cushion the vertebrae. **Bone spurs** (bony outgrowths) may develop, muscles and soft tissue may stretch unevenly, and nerves may become irritated.



Advanced Degeneration

If the disc thins further, the nerves can become pinched and the vertebrae begin to fuse. Pain may be severe, and range of motion



Can Chiropractic Care Help Me?

Your doctor of chiropractic looks at your overall health—focusing not only on your spine but also on your lifestyle. This total approach to wellness helps determine the best treatment for your problem.

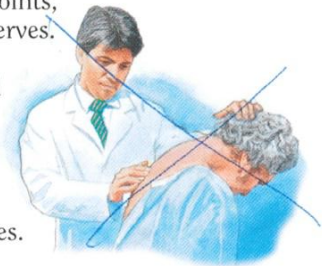
History

To help find the cause of your spinal problem, you and your chiropractor discuss your symptoms, any prior injuries, your health history, and your lifestyle, including work-related and leisure activities.

Physical Exam

Physical, orthopedic (bone and muscle), and neurological (nerve) tests can help reveal the condition of your joints, discs, and spinal nerves.

Your chiropractor gently touches and moves your spine to locate muscle tightness and pain and see how well each vertebra moves.



X-rays

As "blueprints" of your bones, x-rays can reveal spinal degeneration or other problems such as fractures or diseases of your bones. Other tests may be done, if necessary.



Diagnosis

Based on the results of your exam and tests, your doctor of chiropractic may recommend a treatment program. If needed, your chiropractor also consults with or refers you to other

Chiropractic is a method of healthcare that helps ease pain and restore movement. Hands-on techniques are used, not drugs or surgery. A main goal of chiropractic is to keep the body's nerves, bones, and muscles working well together. To do this, care is focused on the spine and joints. In addition to sciatica, chiropractic is useful in treating many other health problems. These include neck and shoulder pain, which can also be caused by problems in the spine.



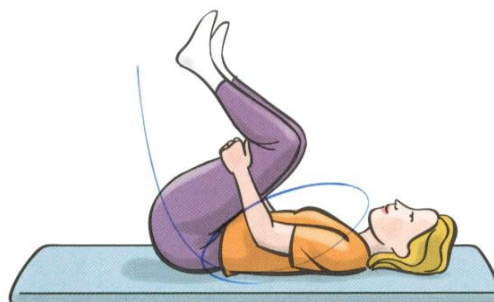
Your Chiropractor

Your Doctor of Chiropractic (chiropractor) has had 6 or more years of education in science and healthcare. He or she can help relieve your sciatic pain and treat some of the underlying causes of your problem. Your chiropractor can also help you create a plan for a healthier lifestyle. This may include tips on exercise, diet, and stress management.

Your chiropractor can make a treatment plan to meet your needs. Work with your chiropractor to help relieve your painful sciatica and keep it from coming back.

What You Can Do

Once you're feeling better, regular stretching can help prevent future problems with sciatica. Try this stretch daily: Lying on your back, bring one knee to your chest. Gently hold for 5 seconds, feeling the stretch in your spine. Then release. Repeat with the other leg. Next, bring both knees to the chest. Gently hold for 10 seconds. Release.



Consultant:

Barbara Berkeley, DC

With contributions by:

Michael S. Andalaro, DC

George T. Bennett, DC

James Demetrius, DC, FACO

Kevin M. Goff, DC

Stuart M. Horen, DC

Deborah Lindemann, DC

Jeffrey C. Mackey, DC, FACO

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Chiropractic Care for Sciatica



Care for Sciatica

The **sciatic nerve** runs from the lower back all the way into the foot. **Sciatica** occurs when this nerve is irritated. Numbness, tingling, pain, and weakness in the lower back and leg are common sciatica symptoms. Sciatica may be a result of disc damage in the spine, or tense muscles in the buttocks. Causes of these problems include prolonged sitting, poor posture when lifting, and injury. Chiropractic care can help reduce pressure on the sciatic nerve. This can ease pain and improve movement.

Your Chiropractic Evaluation

You're asked about your symptoms, past injuries or treatments, and overall health. You're also asked about your daily life. This includes work habits, hobbies, and exercise.

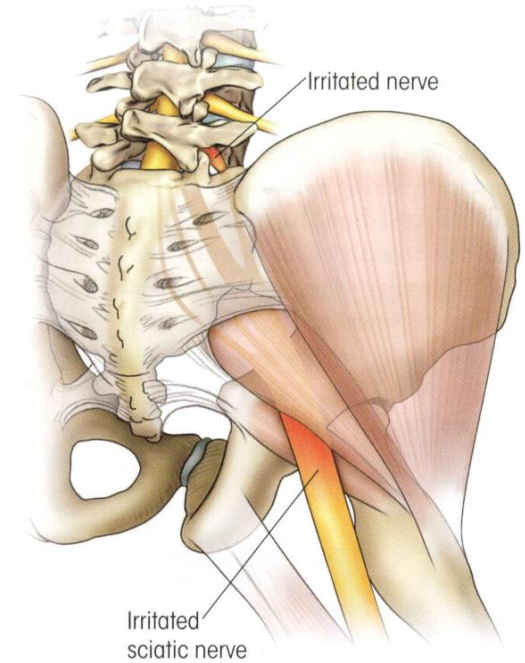
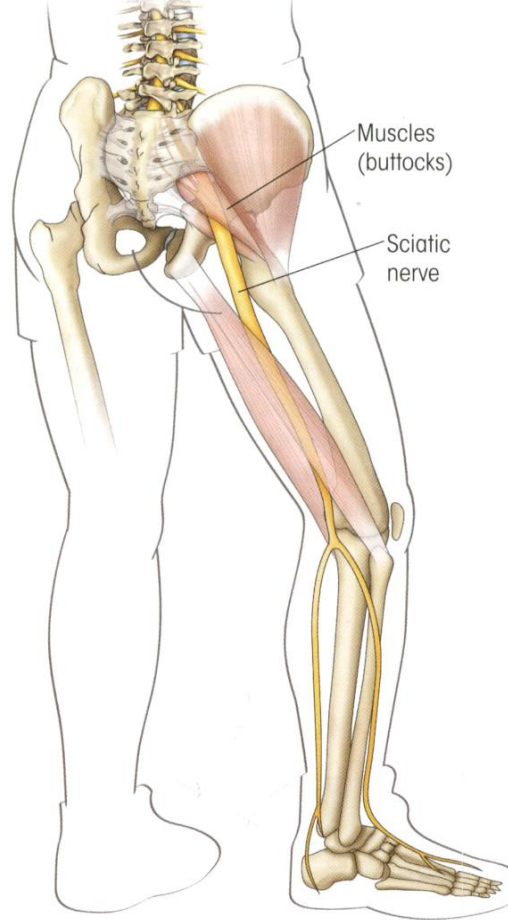
Physical Exam

Your chiropractor examines you. He or she may gently move your spine and legs to locate pain. You may also be asked to walk on your heels or toes. This can help the chiropractor detect nerve problems in your spine.



Other Tests

You may have x-rays or an MRI scan. These tests help show the condition of your spine.



With **sciatica**, the sciatic nerve is irritated. This can happen near the spine or where the nerve passes through the buttocks muscles.

Your Treatment Plan

Your chiropractor creates a plan to care for your sciatica. This likely includes a hands-on technique called manipulation. Other treatment methods also help. In addition, you're taught ways to help relieve pain and keep it from coming back.

Manipulation

Manipulation (also called adjustment) helps improve alignment and flexibility in the spine and joints. During manipulation, your chiropractor carefully applies pressure to affected areas. Sciatica may be treated with manipulation of the lower back. This helps reduce pressure on the sciatic nerve.

Other Treatments

Other treatments may be suggested. These can help reduce pain by relaxing muscles and reducing swelling. They include:

- **Trigger point therapy** to ease muscle tension.
- **Massage, ultrasound, and muscle stimulation** to relax muscles, reduce muscle spasm, and improve blood flow.
- **Traction** to realign the spine and reduce pressure on nerves.
- **Ice** to reduce swelling and **heat** to relax muscles.