

Why Chiropractic Care For Children?

By Dr. Patricia Hort

I have read a sign in a chiropractor's office that stated, "Go ahead and leave your children at home so they can feel as good as you do when they grow up." A bit of an eyebrow raiser, yet realistic. Many problems experienced as adults can be traced back to traumatic incidents during childhood - consider the birth process itself, that first fall from a bed or change table, learning to walk and landing on the bum an number of times in a day, the bumps and knocks that caused those forehead bruises and 'eggs', falls from bikes, downstairs, out of a tree or worse. As resilient as children seem at the time of the injury, that force has to go somewhere.

During the birth process, there are tremendous stresses placed on the head and neck of a newborn. The head is usually the 'handle' that is used to rotate the baby or help get the baby out and sometimes with a great deal of force. Just for perspective, when we are holding a baby, what do we take special care with due to its lack of muscular strength and inherent lack of support??

When the bones, muscles, and ligaments undergo the stress of birth (vaginal or c-section), again, that force has to go somewhere. A newborn can't tell you that it is experiencing pain, but it can demonstrate this in other ways. Infants may only sleep for short periods of time and wake up fussy and inconsolable, they may be generally irritable or feed poorly because of discomfort, latching may be difficult, or there may be preference for one breast over the other, they may have their head tipped to one side or always rotate it to the same side, they may be rigid and stiff - very unlike a happy, comfortable baby. Moms trust your instincts - if your baby seems uncomfortable, irritable and just not content like a baby should be it could be due to trauma at birth .

We are seeing some concerning statistics with our children by the time they are in school. A school age children's health study revealed that 40% of children have low back pain. Forty percent, that just doesn't seem right and if left untreated, will likely develop into adult suffering - what we often see in chiropractic offices. With the use of heavy backpacks, poor posture and the ever increasing use of computers and television our children need and deserve to have their spines evaluated, receive treatment and be given guidance on how to prevent these daily things from creating future problems.

Here are some signs you can look for that might suggest a spinal concern:

- Do your children get colds and flu often?
- Do they have chronic ear infections?
- Is your baby extremely fussy and sometimes inconsolable?
- Are your children constipated?
- Do your children slouch?

Look at your child's posture:

- Does he/she carry their head forward?
- Is one shoulder higher than the other when standing?
- Does one foot turn out or in?

Just as proper attention to teeth can prevent problems later in life, proper attention to the development of the spinal structure can lead to fewer spinal problems as adults. If you suspect a problem or just want your child to have a comprehensive spinal evaluation, please let us know.

The chiropractic evaluation assesses a child's spine for any evidence of spinal stress which in turn leads to nervous system stress. A thorough chiropractic pediatric evaluation helps to document if a child has spinal stress or if he or she could benefit from preventative measures. Only a doctor of chiropractic is trained to detect and treat early stages of spinal degenerative change.

Chiropractic pediatric evaluations include the following unique procedures adapted to developmental age:

- Observation of movement and activities - does the child have symmetrical movement of limbs, and appear to move in comfort?
- Passive movement assessment - is there normal range of motion and proper movement?
- Full spinal motion palpation analysis - how do individual segments of the spine move?
- Digital postural analysis (if age appropriate) - digital evaluation of postural alignment and stresses
- Leg length comparison - assessing hip alignment and pelvic issues
- Scoliosis screening - for early detection of any improper vertebral alignment/compensation
- Gait analysis - is the child's walking pattern normal for his/her age?

If you have a child who has never had a chiropractic spinal evaluation, or if it has been a while, consider arranging this for your child. He or she will not receive this important evaluation by any other health care provider. Call our office for more information or to set up an appointment with Dr. Hort for your family.