

# What can I expect when I see a chiropractor?

**General  
Chiropractic  
Council**



**Protecting patients  
Setting standards**

## What happens when I visit a chiropractor for the first time?

Normally your first visit can last anything between 30 minutes and an hour. During this time, the chiropractor:

- will take a full case history
- may ask you to remove some of your clothes, and will provide privacy for you to do so. Tell your chiropractor if you feel uncomfortable about this. If you are asked to undress, you will be offered a gown
- will ask for your permission to give you a thorough physical examination (this will include neurological and orthopaedic tests, if necessary)
- may take or send you for x-rays if they are needed.

**A chiropractor's first concern is to find out what is wrong. They will also check for signs of any serious conditions for which you would need to go to your GP or to hospital.**

## What is chiropractic treatment?

Chiropractors are concerned with the framework of bones and muscles that support the body (the 'musculoskeletal system'). Some problems of the musculoskeletal system can be caused by accidents, stress, lack of exercise, poor posture, illness and everyday wear and tear. These problems may cause pressure on the nerves in the body.

Depending on your condition, the chiropractor may manipulate parts of your spine or joints and give you advice on exercise, self-help, diet and lifestyle. Some chiropractors also offer rehabilitation programmes.

Manipulation involves precisely handling or moving joints, or parts of the spine, sometimes moving them further than they would normally move.

## **Will the treatment hurt?**

Chiropractic treatment is usually painless unless an area is inflamed (swollen). If this is the case your chiropractor will alter the treatment. Don't worry if you hear a clicking or popping noise when one of your joints is being manipulated – this is perfectly normal with this form of treatment.

Some patients have mild reactions such as temporary aches and pains after their spine or joints have been manipulated or after exercising.

It is important that you talk to your chiropractor if you feel worried about anything either during or after treatment.

## **What do I need to know before my treatment starts?**

**Treatment is very much a partnership between you and your chiropractor.**

Before your treatment starts, your chiropractor should explain to you clearly:

- what they found in the examination
- the treatment plan they propose
- the benefits and any significant risks associated with your condition and proposed treatment.

The receptionist or the chiropractor will tell you how much you will have to pay.

Ask your chiropractor as many questions as you need to, to be sure that you understand what they have told you. Your chiropractor will then ask you to give your permission for treatment (they call this 'consent').

To help you feel more at ease during a consultation, you or your chiropractor may want another person to be there. This might be, for example, a clinic

assistant or you could choose to bring a relative or friend. These arrangements should be made before your appointment, so please let your chiropractor know in good time.

If you would prefer to have only the chiropractor there, please let your chiropractor know. They will not do anything without your consent, and will respect your privacy and dignity at all times.

## **How many visits will I need?**

**This will depend on:**

- your condition
- how severe it is
- how long you have had the condition
- how you respond to treatment
- how much of your chiropractor's advice you follow.

After your first examination and diagnosis, how long any further visits last will depend on your condition and the treatment you need.

The chiropractor will review your progress regularly and you will be asked to give your consent to any changes to your treatment plan. They will discuss carrying out further investigations or referring you to your GP if your condition does not improve.

## **Do I need to tell my GP?**

You do not need to let your GP know unless you want to. With your permission, your chiropractor may send a report to your GP, with details of your condition and the treatment you are receiving. This is because your GP holds all your medical records, and it is in your interests for them to be complete and up to date.

## **Do I have to pay for my treatment?**

You will need to pay for your treatment unless you are covered by Private Medical Insurance (PMI) or a health cash plan, or live in an area where there is NHS-funded chiropractic care.

Treatment through the NHS is not widely available at the moment, so it is a good idea to talk to your GP or chiropractor to find out the situation in your area. If you have PMI, confirm with your provider that chiropractic treatment is covered and tell the chiropractor that this is how you will be paying for treatment.

## **Can anyone call themselves a chiropractor?**

No. It is illegal for anyone in the UK to use the title 'chiropractor' or to imply that they are a chiropractor unless they are registered with us (the General Chiropractic Council). All chiropractors must have insurance cover for claims made against them.

### **By law, we must:**

- check people who apply for registration to make sure that they have a chiropractic qualification, are of good character and are physically and mentally fit
- set and monitor standards of education and training
- set standards of practice and conduct
- deal with any complaints about the conduct or practice of chiropractors.

For more free copies of this leaflet, please contact us at

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If you want to check that a chiropractor is registered, please phone us on **0845 601 1796**. (The call will be charged at local rates.) Or look on our website at [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org), which lists chiropractors in alphabetical and geographical order.

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