

Chiropractic Basics

Chiropractic medicine focuses on problems of joint flexibility and movement. Its intent is to correct deficiencies of movement, thereby, improving the health of the joint and all the structures in and around the joint. The implications of this are astounding when one considers that the spinal column is made up of many joints. The entire body, including all the muscles and internal organs, is supplied off the spinal cord by nerves that pass through the joints of the spinal column.

Chiropractors diagnose and treat subluxations, a joint that is not performing efficiently or effectively. If a joint has a subluxation, that joint is not moving correctly, which disrupts the nutrition to that joint. It also disrupts the nutrition and blood flow to the nervous system in and around the joint. Although the nervous system is not dependent on movement for blood flow, it does provide the nerves with the best blood flow possible. The joints of the spinal column have all the nerves going to the body passing through them. If a joint in the spinal column is subluxated, the lack of movement and subsequent inefficient blood flow affects the nerves that pass through that joint. This inefficient blood flow causes a disruption of the electrical impulses the nerves are supplying to the organs.

An example of the disruption above is muscular back pain caused by subluxations of the lower lumbar region of the spine. The nerves that supply some of the muscles of the back are in the lower lumbar region of the spinal column. When the nerve supply to the back muscles is disrupted, it can cause a variety of responses depending on the amount of disruption, such as back spasms, trigger points, atrophy, or lack of strength. If this is severe enough, the disruption can cause paralysis and/or intense pain.

An adjustment is what treats the subluxation. "An adjustment is characterized by a specific force applied in a specific direction to a specific vertebra...Adjustments are high velocity procedures designed to deliver maximal force with minimal tissue damage. The adjustment is unique to the chiropractic profession and requires a great deal of skill to control the depth, direction, speed and amplitude of the procedure." (Willoughby, 1998) It also requires detailed knowledge of anatomy, specifically the joints of the vertebral column. The goal of the adjustment is not to put the vertebra back in place, but to increase flexibility of the joint and to reduce connective tissue and muscular restrictions that put forces onto the joint affecting its normal movement. Depending on the severity and length of time a subluxation has been present, chiropractic care is given in a series of therapeutic treatments, varying from a few days to a couple weeks apart to gradually restore normal function. After initial treatments, the animal is then placed on a maintenance program to obviously maintain normal function.

The goals of having chiropractic adjustments can be as simple as having your animal feel and perform better, to resolving biomechanical problems, to helping heal extreme pain and paralysis. Athletes need to perform at peak efficiency without stiffness or discomfort. Lack of proper joint function reduces power and reduces flexibility; for example, subluxations in the lower lumbar area affects the flexibility and power of the hind legs, which is especially important to propel the animal forward – the most important aspect in any athletic performance. Regular chiropractic care helps resolve this issue. It also helps in severely traumatized animals, such as an animal with a fractured leg. Traditional medicine takes care of the actual fracture; however chiropractic takes care of the subluxations occurring from the biomechanical alterations of walking on three legs while the fracture heals. With this wide array of goals, it does seem that any animal alive with a spine should have a chiropractic adjustment.

For more information –
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