



When do you refer to a chiropractor?

Doctors of Chiropractic (chiropractors) are spine and musculoskeletal (MSK) system experts. They can diagnose patients and treat MSK conditions to relieve pain, restore mobility and prevent injury so people can lead healthy, active lives.

Chiropractors complete a minimum of seven years of accredited post-secondary education. Four years of their education has a significant focus on musculoskeletal issues including substantial training in the indications for ordering and interpretation of diagnostic imaging and other adjunct diagnostic tests. Their specialized education enables them to diagnose and treat musculoskeletal conditions and provide lifestyle recommendations to help support and maintain their patient's health.

Common conditions effectively treated by chiropractic include:

- Conditions of the spine and extremities (bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nervous system)
- Back pain (thoracic, lumbar and sacral)
- Neck pain (cervical spine and related structures)
- Headaches and migraines
- Chronic and acute pain syndromes, including myofascial pain syndromes
- Whiplash and auto accident injuries
- Strains and sprains
- Arthritis
- Costochondritis
- Gait assessment and analysis
- Lifestyle recommendations

Chiropractic treatment includes:

- Spinal manipulative therapy (SMT)
- Soft tissue therapies
- Prescriptive exercises

Some chiropractors may also use other therapies such as acupuncture, massage, heat, ultrasound, shock-wave therapy or traction.

Chiropractors are often the first choice for referral by Diagnostic Treatment Protocols Regulation (DTPR) and the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB).

Because chiropractors are educated to diagnose and treat musculoskeletal conditions, they are often chosen as primary health-care providers for patients referred through the DTPR and WCB.

To help assess and diagnose their patients, chiropractors can order x-rays, ultrasounds, MRI and CT scans. As many patients come to chiropractic through WCB or DTPR, their costs are already being covered.

Chiropractors are an integral part of the health-care team.

A chiropractor's primary focus is on improving their patients' health. The best way to achieve this is through collaboration with medical doctors, physiotherapists and other members that make up a patient's health-care team.

As primary contact health professionals, chiropractors are committed to developing and fostering awareness, education and professional relationships in support of a strong multi-disciplinary, patient-centered approach to health-care delivery in Alberta.

Some chiropractors practise in stand-alone clinics where interdisciplinary referrals are made as needed to other health-care practitioners in their community. Other chiropractors work in multidisciplinary settings where patient care is team-based. In either practice setting, chiropractors value the collaboration of all health disciplines in the support of best patient care.



Chiropractors are collaborative and communicative team members.

A chiropractor is authorized to make a direct referral to any medical specialist for consultation and/or treatment when appropriate. When patients come in with non-MSK conditions and orthopedic emergencies like dislocations and fractures, the chiropractor will refer them to the health-care provider that is best equipped to help them.

Alberta's own Toward Optimized Performance Clinical Practice Guidelines on Low Back Pain supports collaboration and interdisciplinary referral, including chiropractic care.

Chiropractic treatment is covered by most extended health plans, making chiropractic care easily accessible for most Albertans.



The development of interprofessional relationships and appropriate patient referrals among other health professions, primarily the medical profession, will enhance the patient experience, provide better outcomes and ultimately ensure the most effective health-care options are readily available to Albertans.

For more information visit albertachiro.com



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