



## Chiropractic: Pregnancy and Infant Care

More and more women are discovering the many benefits associated with chiropractic care throughout pregnancy. Birth care providers are seeking the skills of Doctors of Chiropractic trained in the Webster Technique and other specific chiropractic adjustments for the pregnant woman.

### Is Chiropractic Care Safe During Pregnancy?

Chiropractic care during pregnancy is safe for both mother and fetus. Spinal adjustments are especially gentle during pregnancy as far less force is required to correct misalignments/subluxations. This is due to the increase in hormones causing significant muscle and ligamentous relaxation. Special "adjustive" positions are also used to provide comfort and safety for both mom and fetus.

### How Can Chiropractic Care Help During Pregnancy?

During pregnancy, weight-bearing changes occur. This can cause an added stress to the spine. Over the course of a 40-week gestation, a mother's weight gain will ideally reach somewhere between 30-40 lbs. This increase in weight can create spinal misalignment and/or postural distortions which in turn affect nerves, muscles and mobility of joints. As the bulk of this weight is deposited in the abdominal area, the mother's center of gravity shifts forward. In order to compensate, the natural curves of the spine, particularly in the lumbar region, become exaggerated causing low back pain.

The hips may also expand laterally to help stabilize the body, putting pressure on the sacro-iliac joints. The hormones of pregnancy cause muscles, and ligaments to relax. Pelvic bones "slip" and can become more easily displaced and/or fixated. In addition, round ligaments attached to pelvic bones and then to the uterus stretch as the uterus enlarges, with the growth of the baby. When these ligaments are strained or torqued, as with sudden movement or "rolling over", they can cause even more discomfort for the pregnant mother.

As the baby grows and the body adapts, often the ribs must expand to accommodate. Rib misalignment is a common complaint of pregnant mothers which is easily corrected by chiropractic adjustments and soft tissue therapy.

### **Chiropractic care during pregnancy not only improves your comfort, but can also help facilitate your birth.**

- Chiropractic care during pregnancy has been shown to significantly reduce the length of time a woman labours. First time moms averaged a 24% shorter labour, while mothers who have already given birth experienced a 39% reduction in the average labour length, compared to controls (Fallon, 1991).
- Chiropractic adjustments during pregnancy can also reduce the likelihood of experiencing back labour (Diakow, 1991).
- Regular chiropractic adjustments can safely continue up until the time of birth (Penna, 1989).

### **Pregnancy and the Webster Technique Defined**

Sacral misalignment causes the tightening and torsion of specific pelvic muscles and ligaments. It is these tense muscles and ligaments and their constraining effect on the uterus which prevents the baby from comfortably assuming the best possible position for birth.

The **Webster Technique** is defined as a specific chiropractic analysis and adjustment that reduces interference to the nerve system and facilitates biomechanical balance in pelvic structures, muscles and ligaments. This has been shown to reduce the effects of intrauterine constraint, allowing the baby to get into the best possible position for birth. Dr. Larry Webster, Founder of the International Chiropractic Paediatric Association (ICPA) discovered this technique as a safe means to restore proper pelvic balance and function for pregnant mothers. In expectant mothers presenting breech, there has been a high reported success rate of the baby turning to the normal vertex position. (This technique is not to be interpreted as an obstetric, "breech turning" technique which is a different procedure).

### **What Can Chiropractic Do for Your Child?**

More and more parents are seeking chiropractic care for their children. Many spinal problems seen in adults can begin as early as birth. Even 'natural' birthing methods can stress an infant's spine and developing nerve system. The resulting irritation to the nerve system caused by spinal and cranial misalignment can be the cause of many newborn health complaints.

Colic, breathing problems, nursing difficulties, sleep disturbances, allergic reactions and chronic infections can often be traced to nerve system stress which chiropractic adjustments treat. One of the most common reasons parents seek care for their child is trauma from an injury (eg. falls, sports). These misalignments may not result in immediate pain or symptoms.

Chiropractic checkups can:

- identify potential spinal misalignments from these traumas,
- make the correction early in life,
- and help avoid many of the health complaints seen later in adults.

***Proper spinal hygiene is an important key to better health!***

### **Colic: Chiropractic Can Help**

Colic is defined as an unexplainable and uncontrollable crying in babies from 0 to 3 months old, more than 3 hours a day, more than 3 days a week, for 3 weeks or more, usually in the afternoon and evening hours.

A study in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiologic Therapeutics concluded, "Spinal manipulation is effective in relieving infantile colic". In the course of the study, the children being adjusted saw a 67% reduction in crying and the drug therapy group saw only a 38% reduction in crying. The average number of adjustments given during the two-week study was 3.8.