

# FACT SHEET

## BABIES AND PREGNANT WOMEN



Chiropractic is a health care system that does not use drugs – an important consideration particularly during pregnancy. The many physical chemical changes in a women's body at this time can aggravate existing spinal problems and can also make the spine and pelvis unstable through the relaxation of ligaments. Together with the postural changes likely to occur as a result of increased body weight, pain in the lower back, buttocks, groin and legs is common during pregnancy..

Chiropractic can help to correct any restricted joint movements and maintain spinal balance, as well as ensuring that the pelvis is correctly aligned – both before and after your baby is born. Your Chiropractor may also advise you on how to lift and carry, how to improve your posture and how to improve your spinal health. Women may find their labour shorter and experience less discomfort if they have received Chiropractic care, and may return after the physical stress of childbirth for check-ups for themselves and their children.

Birth can sometimes be a very difficult and traumatic time for the baby as well as the mother. After the baby's head has engaged, usually during the eighth-month of pregnancy, there can be a lot of stress on their head and back as they continue to move in the womb. This stress can increase further during the birth process, particularly if it is prolonged or involves unusual presentation or assisted delivery techniques such a forceps or ventouse.

As the child grows up, and starts to walk, climb and run, the inevitable falls and bumps can affect the still developing bones of the spine and skull. Once at school, the child may carry heavy bags, sit on badly designed chairs and participate in a variety of sporting activities.

These stresses and injuries can result in the tightening of the muscles in the neck or back, hence causing the bones of the spine to lose their normal motion or position. This can irritate or put stress on to the nerve roots that branch from the spinal cord to the organs and tissues of the body. In babies and young children this may lead to symptoms including:

- Asthma
- Prolonged crying
- Colic
- Sleep and feeding problems
- Breathing difficulties
- Hyperactivity
- Bed wetting
- Frequent infections

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Instead of treating the symptoms with drugs, or assuming the child will 'grow out of it', the Chiropractor will gently adjust the child's spine to remove the nerve stress. A study in Denmark revealed that when spinal adjustments were given to 316 infants with colic, 94% of them were relieved of symptoms within a two week period of treatment.

### Handling Your Child Safely?

Those of you who have ever had a new baby in the house know how daunting it can be to hold and handle him/her. These tips offer advice to parents of babies and young children about avoiding injury and dealing with accidents.

- Hold the baby close to your body. Support the back of the neck and place one or two fingers at the back of the head.
- When bathing the baby, be sure to support the head by cradling it.
- Never lay the baby completely flat when feeding. Note if there is any discomfort while the baby feeds – is it on one side particularly? If so, the baby may have a problem with the neck, and a visit to your Chiropractor is advised.
- Resist the temptation to playfully throw a baby or small child into the air. This gives no support for the spine and can result in neck problems, almost like a whiplash injury.
- When picking up a child, support him or her under the arms. Ideally you should be squatting (to protect your own back) and the child's spine should be straight.
- Avoid pulling upward on the arm of a small child while he/she is walking: this can lead to neck and back problems as well as injuring the shoulder and elbow joints.
- The birth process is one of the most traumatic events of our lives and the spine may be stressed, resulting in irritation to the nervous system. The effects of which may manifest as infant colic, or a restless, crying baby. A Chiropractor can help.
- When dressing or undressing a child, ensure that the neckline is big enough for his/her head to pass through without pulling the neck.

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- Accidents occur frequently with baby walking frames (especially when they have wheels). In addition, the infant may be weight bearing too soon, which may lead to damage in the spine. It also discourages the child from crawling, which is an important stage in it's development.
- If you are involved in a road traffic accident and your child is in the car, make sure that he/she is examined by your Chiropractor too – even if there is no apparent injury.
- During infancy and childhood there are many bumps and falls during a period of rapid growth. If neglected, these may lead to serious problems later in life.
- Chiropractic adjusting techniques are modified to suit the child's size and weight – so as well as having your child's eyes and teeth checked, make sure you have his/her spine checked by your Chiropractor.

When you or your child attend a clinic for Chiropractic treatment, your Chiropractor will take a thorough medical history and will conduct standard neurological and orthopaedic tests to determine whether spinal function is normal. Treatment normally consists of gentle adjustments to the parts of the spine that are not moving properly. Your Chiropractor will use modified techniques to ensure comfort and safety for pregnant women and children.

Chiropractic techniques can be used safely at all stages of pregnancy.

You get your children's teeth and eyes checked regularly, so why not their spines too?

For advice or a free consultation please call Dynamic Chiropractic on 0800 652 8854.

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