

# Beyond Bad Backs: What Chiropractic Is and How It Can Help You

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Many people have a misconception about chiropractic and the critical role it plays in health and well-being. That misconception is that chiropractic care is limited to treating back and neck pain. Although many people have experienced relief from back and neck pain through chiropractic services, the foundation, intent, and vision of chiropractic is far beyond simply helping to reduce symptoms.

Chiropractic is the largest licensed, non-medical health-care profession in North America, with approximately 60,000 practitioners in the United States. Chiropractors are doctors. They earn a Doctor of Chiropractic degree after completing three to four years of undergraduate study, and a four-year professional course. After graduation, they must pass further exams to obtain a license to practice.

There are basically 2 styles of chiropractic practice. One type of chiropractor is what we refer to as limited scope practitioner. These chiropractors choose to limit their practice to dealing with back and neck pain only. Such doctors provide specialized care to patients with musculoskeletal injuries and disorders.

The other type of chiropractic doctor is a wellness chiropractor. This wellness chiropractor focuses on your general health and well-being, and that of your family. The objective of the wellness chiropractor is to work with you in maximizing your life potential.

In his book "[The Wellness Revolution](#)" [1], economist Paul Zane Pilzer predicts that wellness will become the next trillion-dollar industry. According to Pilzer, wellness is "not about a fad or trend, it's about a new and infinite need infusing itself into the way we eat, exercise, sleep, work, save, age, and almost every other aspect of our lives."

Pilzer succinctly articulates the difference between sick care and health care: "The sickness business is reactive. Despite its enormous size, people become customers only when they are stricken by and react to a specific condition or complaint...the wellness business is proactive. People voluntarily become customers -- to feel healthier, to reduce the effects of aging, and to avoid becoming customers of the sickness business. Everyone wants to be a customer of this earlier-stage approach to health."

As the culture moves in a direction seeking behaviors that enhance well-being, there will be those who attempt to fit old paradigms with new clothes. For example, some factions in medicine are promoting early detection protocols as "wellness" services.

Such services may include such things as screening for hypertension, cancer, or other medical conditions. While there is a place for early disease detection, it should not be confused with a wellness strategy.

Similarly, some medical and chiropractic practitioners employ fear-driven preventive strategies. People are encouraged to get their spines checked, or control their blood pressure because they fear the consequences of not doing so. As with strategies based upon the early detection of disease, such approaches should not be confused with wellness care.

## Wellness Paradigms

	<b>Conventional Medicine</b>	<b>Wellness Chiropractic</b>
<b>Goal</b>	Prevention and early detection of disease	Maximize the expression on innate potential
<b>Strategy</b>	Passive	Active
<b>Motive</b>	Fear	Empowerment
<b>Practitioner role</b>	Dominant	Partner/Coach
<b>How delivered</b>	Event	Process
<b>Temporal profile</b>	Episodic	Lifetime
<b>Criteria</b>	Based on "normal" values and epidemiologic data	Goals set by the individual

What then is wellness? The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines wellness simply: "The quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal." [2]

Arizona State University has a more comprehensive definition: "Wellness is an active, lifelong process of becoming aware of choices and making decisions toward a more balanced and fulfilling life. Wellness involves choices about our lives and our priorities that determine our lifestyles. The wellness concept at ASU is centered on connections and the idea that the mind, body, spirit and community are all interrelated and interdependent." [3]

The National Wellness Institute definition is as follows:

"Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a more successful existence.

The key words in this first sentence are process, aware, choices and success.

- Process means that we never arrive at a point where there is no possibility of improving.
- Aware means that we are by our nature continuously seeking more information about how we can improve.
- Choices means that we have considered a variety of options and select those that seem to be in our best interest.
- Success is determined by each individual to their personal collection of accomplishments for their life." [4]

Finally, consider the elements of this definition proposed by Travis:

"Wellness is a choice -- a decision you make towards optimal health. Wellness is a way of life -- a lifestyle you design to achieve your highest potential for well being. Wellness is a process -- a developing awareness that there is no end point, but that health and happiness are possible in each moment, here and now. Wellness is a positive acceptance of oneself. Wellness is the interaction of the body, mind and spirit -- the appreciation that everything we do, think, feel, and believe has an impact on our state of health."

These definitions embrace a vision of wellness grounded in empowerment, choice, and awareness. The wellness concepts sharply contrast with those of the fear driven, patient passive, episodic strategies of early detection, prevention, and maintenance.

Chiropractic is based on the philosophy that the body is a self-healing, self-regulating and self-developing organism and that your nervous system is the master system and controller of your body. If you cut your finger, it heals. You don't have to take anything or do anything to make that happen. If you were to cut the finger of a dead person, healing would not occur. Life heals, it is as simple as that.

You live your life through your nervous system. It is the master system and controller of your body. Right now your heart is beating, kidneys are working, liver is functioning, brain chemicals are flowing all without you having to think about it. This is because your nervous system is coordinating it all and making it happen. What would happen if there was interference with the function of your nervous system? It would interfere with you body's ability to heal and regulate.

An important term and concept that every person should know and understand is vertebral subluxation. Vertebral subluxation, or subluxation for short, refers to a mechanical problem in the spine that relates to nerve interference. When a person is subluxated, it reduces their ability to heal, regulate and express well-being. Like cavities in teeth, subluxations are very common in our culture. It is the primary goal of the chiropractor to detect and correct subluxations so that you can improve healing, regulation, and general well-being

A limited nervous system means limited wellness. If we want to optimally create higher levels of wellness, we then need to remove nervous system interference as a part of the process. Chiropractors are uniquely trained to do this. Millions of people, from infants to seniors over 100 years old, benefit from chiropractic adjustments every year.

The chiropractic profession is perfectly positioned to lead the wellness revolution, and to reap the benefits, material and spiritual, of accepting that challenge. Vertebral subluxations affecting sensation may distort your perceptions of the internal and external environments. The inevitable consequence is a distorted world view. Furthermore, vertebral subluxations may interfere with our responses to internal and external change. Such subluxations compromise our ability to experience life to our fullest potential.

By addressing vertebral subluxations, and the physical, biochemical, and emotional distress that cause such subluxations, a person seeking wellness care enhances their life experience. A wellness patient does not seek merely to maintain the status quo, return to pre-injury status, or prevent illness. Such an individual recognizes that chiropractic care is a lifelong process -- a way of life -- that is an integral component of a global strategy for human empowerment.