



# SAFETY



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Some people are worried about seeing a chiropractor because they think that chiropractic adjustments might be harmful or dangerous. However, the research relating to chiropractic care shows us that it is remarkably safe,<sup>1</sup> and it's effective<sup>2</sup> and it's associated with high levels of patient satisfaction.<sup>3</sup> Chiropractic care actually has an enviable safety record compared to most other healthcare interventions.<sup>1,4</sup>

## There must be some risk?

Virtually all forms of healthcare are associated with some risk.<sup>5</sup> With the sort of manual or 'hands-on' procedures that chiropractors use in everyday practice, it's logical that there is at least some risk that on rare occasions some people may suffer from an adverse event after seeing their chiropractor.



A number of researchers have reviewed all the published literature relating to the safety of chiropractic care.<sup>6-8</sup> According to these reviews, serious adverse events are very rare and most of the time the scientists weren't sure if the chiropractic care actually caused the event or not.<sup>6-8</sup>

Because serious adverse events are so rare following chiropractic care, it's virtually impossible for researchers to accurately estimate how often they actually occur.<sup>6</sup> So, there are only rough estimates for serious adverse events. And these estimates range from one in 20,000 to one in several million chiropractic visits.<sup>4</sup> But let's put this into perspective; another study has shown that people who have to go to hospital have as high as a one in three chance of suffering from an adverse event.<sup>9</sup>

What is more common with chiropractic care is that some people can feel a bit stiff and sore after they've been adjusted, but this usually goes away by itself.<sup>1,6,7</sup>

So, according to the best reviews of all the science literature on this topic, we know that being seriously hurt from seeing your chiropractor is extremely rare.<sup>4,8,9</sup> In fact, the statistics tell us that you are about 10 times more likely to be seriously injured driving to and from your chiropractor's office than you are from being seriously injured while seeing your chiropractor.<sup>10</sup>

## Stroke

Despite all of these studies showing how rare adverse events are with chiropractic care, there are still some people who are worried a chiropractic adjustment could cause a stroke. This has also been studied very carefully.<sup>8, 11</sup> In two separate studies researchers looked at extremely large patient databases from insurance plans in Canada and America and compared over 2600 patients who had actually suffered from a stroke involving arteries in their neck and they compared them to people who hadn't had a stroke.<sup>8, 11</sup> They looked to see whether the people who had suffered a stroke were more likely to have seen a chiropractor or a medical doctor before suffering from the stroke.

What they found was that people who had suffered from one of these strokes were no more likely to have seen a chiropractor than a medical doctor before the stroke occurred. In some groups, they were actually more likely to have visited a medical doctor than a chiropractor before the stroke.

## What does this mean?

These studies suggest that patients who suffer from a stroke after seeing a chiropractor probably went to see the chiropractor because they had neck pain or headaches that had been caused by the early stages of the blood vessel damage that ultimately caused the stroke. So, the stroke had already started before they went to see the chiropractor. It also means that there is no greater

risk of suffering from a stroke if you choose to visit a chiropractor compared to the risks from visiting a medical doctor.

So, if you or someone you know is worried about seeing a chiropractor, you can rest assured that chiropractic care is associated with very low risk of causing serious harm.<sup>6, 7</sup> The risks are so rare that they cannot accurately be estimated,<sup>5, 11</sup> and of the risk estimates that have been made, most suggest that serious adverse events associated with chiropractic care happen perhaps every several hundred thousand visits.<sup>5, 6</sup> Like any healthcare intervention, some adverse events do of course occur with chiropractic care<sup>5, 6</sup> and these adverse events are generally minor and go away by themselves<sup>5, 6</sup> and don't take away from the high levels of patient satisfaction associated with chiropractic care.<sup>3</sup> So, despite what some people think, chiropractic has an enviable safety record and you can rest assured that if you go see your chiropractor, you're in safe hands.



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