

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Joseph Baker

Chiropractic Adjustments May Restore Hearing

The first chiropractic adjustment — performed by Dr. Daniel David Palmer in 1895 on a patient named Harvey Lillard — was reported to cure the patient's deafness. Since then, the link between chiropractic adjustments and hearing has not been widely publicized. However, new research is revisiting this exciting possible benefit of chiropractic care. Dr. Baker is thrilled to share this research with patients and the community.



The Toll of Hearing Loss on Health

Hearing loss is common, especially among older adults. Specifically, between 25 percent and 40 percent of people over the age of 65 experience hearing loss (*Ear Hear* 1990;11:879-86).

Hearing loss adversely affects health in several ways. Communication is curtailed, and social interaction may deteriorate, affecting relationships and well-being. Research reveals a significant association between a decline in hearing and depression among the elderly (*J Am Geriatr Soc* 1990;38:45-50).

The onset of hearing loss is usually slow, so that many patients suffer the

effects of weakened hearing without being aware they have the condition. That's why hearing screening tests are so important. If you haven't had your hearing assessed in a while, please ask us for resources. And, if you suspect that your hearing is regressing, or if you have a family history of hearing loss, schedule an appointment with Dr. Baker today.

Research Shows Chiropractic May Restore Hearing

A growing body of scientific research demonstrates that chiropractic care may restore hearing.

For instance, one hot-off-the-presses study led by Joseph Di Duro of the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research in Davenport, Iowa, looked at nine men and six women with hearing loss. The patients averaged 54 years of age. Researchers conducted hearing tests among this group of individuals and another group with normal hearing (*Chiropr Osteopat* 2006;14:2).

The patients underwent a chiropractic examination to determine the presence of **vertebral subluxation**. This common condition occurs when spinal bones (vertebrae) move slightly out of alignment or motion is restricted. Research links vertebral subluxations with a vast array of disorders, including back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, attention problems, asthma and infan-



tile colic. Doctors of chiropractic like Dr. Baker correct vertebral subluxations with gentle maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**. Researchers also refer to this technique as spinal manipulation.

The patients in the study received chiropractic adjustments wherever dysfunction occurred in the individual patient's spine. Just as in regular chiropractic care, adjustments were custom-tailored for the individual patient.

During hearing tests conducted prior to the adjustments, individuals with normal hearing heard approximately 120 tones in each ear. Among those with hearing loss, "the total number of tones heard on the initial exam was fewer in the right ear (55 tones) than the left (83 tones) on the initial visit. After a single chiropractic intervention, the total tones heard increased to 104 on the right and 111 on the left (an increase of 49 and 28 respectively)."



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Using standard diagnostic criteria (Ventry & Weinstein criteria), audiologists found that among the 15 patients, “post chiropractic intervention, 6 had their hearing restored, 7 had hearing improvements, 2 did not change and none worsened.” (*Chiropr Osteopat* 2006;14:2.) A whopping 87 percent of patients enjoyed restored or significantly improved hearing.

Using a second set of standard diagnostic criteria (Speech-frequency criteria), 73 percent had significant hearing improvements.

The study concludes that “a percentage of patients presenting to the chiropractor have a mild to moderate hearing loss, most notably in the right ear. The clinical progress documented in this report suggests that manipulation delivered to the neuromusculoskeletal system may create ... changes in the auditory system.”

Additional Studies Demonstrate Chiropractic Helps Hearing

Additional research illustrates that chiropractic adjustments may enhance hearing.

For instance, one study indicates that chiropractic care may alleviate the symptoms of Meniere’s disease, which include vertigo, ringing in the ears and hearing loss. The case study of a 43-year-old schoolteacher with the disorder found that she “experienced substantially reduced symptoms with chiropractic care during the 7-year observation period.” The study also found that neck pain associated with vertebral subluxation typically preceded the exacerbation of ear symptoms, “along with the relief of both following adjustment and an association between improved hearing and improved cervical alignment.” (*Chiropr J Aust* 2002;32:119-30.)

Another case study followed a 75-year-old woman with a longstanding history of vertigo, ringing in the ears and hearing loss. X-rays of the patient’s spine revealed spinal degeneration associated with vertebral subluxation in the spine of the neck (cervical spine). Chiropractic adjustments alleviated the patient’s condition (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:352.)

Another analysis looked at 62 patients in Germany with hearing disorders related to vertebral subluxations in the spine of the neck. Most of the patients (68 percent) exhibited hearing loss in only the right ear. The study concluded that “the therapy of choice is chiropractic manipulation of the upper cervical spine.” (*HNO* 1994;42:604.)



Another German inquiry tracked a 36-year-old soccer player who nearly lost hearing in the right ear after hitting a soccer ball with his head. His hearing returned immediately following chiropractic adjustments to the spine of the neck and upper back (*Man Med* 1998;36:269).

Finally, an analysis of 105 patients in Russia who were being evaluated for vertebral subluxation determined that 19 of the subjects had hearing disorders. The study’s authors concluded that 17 of these individuals’ hearing could improve with chiropractic adjustments to the neck (*Otorinolaringol* 1987;2:28-31).

How Might Chiropractic Adjustments Restore Hearing?

A review study, which pored through medical and chiropractic research on the topic, supports a link between the spine and hearing (*Chiropr J Aust* 2002;32:14-26).

Researchers theorize that chiropractic adjustments may improve hearing by a variety of mechanisms, all of which involve the nervous system.

The brain and the spinal cord make up the central nervous system. Spinal

vertebrae are stacked one on top of another to comprise the spinal column. The center of each vertebra is hollow, forming a protective tube, which the spinal cord flows through. The spinal cord connects with the brain at the base of the skull. Nerves enter and exit the spinal cord through openings between spinal vertebrae. These nerves communicate messages with organs and tissues throughout the body.

Scientists suggest that dysfunction in the spinal column, in the form of vertebral subluxations, may interfere with nervous system activity. Chiropractic adjustments may influence the spinal cord and, in turn, regions of the brain associated with hearing, including the sensory cortex, the thalamus and the brainstem (*Chiropr Osteopat* 2006;14:2). Research illustrates that “cervical manipulation [chiropractic adjustments to the spine of the neck] activates specific neurological pathways.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1997;20:529-45.)

Hearing Loss? Try Chiropractic!

While additional research is needed before a firm link may be established, studies conducted so far imply that chiropractic adjustments may improve hearing. Besides, chiropractic offers so many other health benefits, why not give it a try?

Because hearing loss occurs so slowly, many older adults are unaware that they actually have a hearing problem. Prevention is also key. If you suspect that you or a loved one might suffer from hearing loss, or you have a family history of weak hearing, make an appointment with our office today. The doctor is currently accepting new patients. However, new patient appointment slots are filling up swiftly, so don’t delay.

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