



Dynamic Chiropractic – January 16, 1995, Vol. 13, Issue 02

Spinal Subluxations in Children

By Peter Fysh, DC

This month I want to discuss the cause of some common problems which can affect a child's spine. Just like adults, children can develop spinal problems. But unlike adults, the most common spinal problems in children usually do not cause back pain.

Frequently children's spinal problems may be the cause of some very common childhood complaints, few of which may appear to have anything to do with the spine. But more importantly, these undetected spinal problems in children may be the cause of serious spinal degeneration in later adult life. It is not uncommon for chiropractors, when examining x-rays of an adult's spine, to detect degenerative changes which began many years previously. This is just one reason why a childhood spinal examination is "a must" for all active healthy children.

The cause of the most common childhood spinal problem identified and treated by chiropractors is the pediatric spinal subluxation. To better understand the pediatric spinal subluxation we need to examine its causes and effects and to look at how it is treated. Let's look at some of the questions which might arise.

What Is It?

Pediatric vertebral subluxation is potentially the most pervasive and most unrecognized cause of persistent health problems in today's childhood population. The identification of this problem requires a detailed and thorough examination of a child's spine.

The subtle warning signs which might be present to indicate the existence of spinal subluxation in children may include:

- stiffness or restricted back or neck movement;

- posture shows the head being tilted to one side; one shoulder higher than the other; one hip higher than the other; or one leg longer than the opposite;
- any child who has pain when light pressure is applied to any part of the spine, or who has tightness or muscle spasm anywhere along the spine, should have a thorough spinal examination to determine the possible cause.

How Does It Occur?

To answer this question we must first examine the potential causes of pediatric spinal subluxations. We can do this by looking at the everyday happenings in a child's life which may produce such problems.

Numerous situations in a child's life can contribute to the establishment of these subtle spinal problems.

Trauma is something which we might think of first, but what about the less recognized causes such as postural stresses caused by sitting and sleeping positions, and toxins associated with pollution from the air or even the things that children eat and drink? Finally, mental stress in children could be a cause of subluxated spinal vertebrae. Let's look at each of these in turn.

Trauma

Trauma is probably the most well recognized cause of spinal subluxations. Perhaps what is not so well recognized is that spinal subluxations can start right at birth, or can be caused simply by taking a young infant for a trip in the family car. Trauma to a child's spine can occur even before the child is born. Medical researchers have suggested that spinal subluxations can be induced by the position which the baby occupies in the womb, or by the lack of available space for each baby such as when the mother is pregnant with twins.¹

Prolonged or difficult labor has also been identified as a potential cause of spinal subluxations. Biedermann identified that in a group of 114 newborn infants with identifiable spinal subluxations, 38 had been born after undergoing a prolonged labor.² Medical author Lierse found such a high incidence of problems caused by the birth process that he concluded that "the birth canal is one of the most dangerous obstacles we ever

have to transverse."³ Siefert examined a random sample of 1,000 newborn babies' spines and identified that almost 12 percent had undetected spinal subluxations.⁴

Physical trauma in infancy and childhood can also be a cause of spinal subluxations. Some children seem to have so many falls when they are growing up that it is hard for parents to know whether a fall has caused a problem or not. It is possible for a child to incur spinal subluxations simply by falling from a bed, falling down steps, falling while learning to walk. In most cases we just wipe away their tears and hope for the best.

The family automobile can be the cause of potential spinal problems. When we place an infant in the car, we strap them into a car seat so that they are well protected. But what about their head and neck? The infant's head is free to move about under the forces generated by the car's movement. Sudden stops, fast lane changes, etc., can cause the unprotected head to move about, placing significant strain on the baby's neck. If you have ever slept in a car on a long journey, then you might be able to appreciate that unanticipated movements of the head and neck can be the cause of later neck problems.

Many daily situations that kids find themselves in can have the potential to cause spinal subluxations. Sleeping on a mattress that is old and bends into a banana shape can place undue stress on the developing spine. Researchers have identified prolonged sitting as being the most common cause of back pain in children. Some of the awkward and unnatural positions which kids get into while watching TV can place undue strain on developing spinal structures.

Toxins

Toxins encountered in everyday life can be potential problem for children. Historically, the effect of toxins in the human system has been suggested as a cause of spinal subluxation. One can site many examples where a child might encounter toxins, but the most commonly recognized are probably the toxic effect of chemical pollutants in the environment. With so much refining and processing of the foods we eat, not only has a lot of the natural goodness been eliminated but chemicals have been added to give flavor and color and preservatives added to extend shelf life. Headaches associated with over-ingestion of caffeinated drinks, can be a common problem in today's kids.

Mental Stress

Chiropractic's founder D.D. Palmer suggested that autosuggestion could be the cause of spinal subluxations. With the increased pace and stress of life, 100 years later, chiropractors daily encounter patients with spinal subluxations either caused by or exacerbated by the stress of life. If stress is a factor producing spinal subluxations in adults, can the same effect be occurring in children? Sometimes we might forget about the stress factors that exist in the daily lives of children. School work, exams, social and peer group pressures are stressful for kids, but what about family discord? All too commonly today, children are close observers of a marriage break-up with the associated arguments and tension.

Next month we will answer the questions:

- What does subluxation do to a child?
- Which common kids' disorders have been linked with spinal subluxations?
- What happens if subluxations are not corrected?
- How do you fix them?
- Is it safe?
- How long does it take?

References

1. Biedermann H. Kinematic imbalances due to sub-occipital strain in newborn infants. *Journal Man Med* (1992): 151-156.
2. idib.
3. Lierse W. Breck in der schwangerschaft und das neugeborene. In: Lanz T. *Practical Anatomy*, Springer: New York, 1988.
4. Siefert I. Kopfelenkblockierung bei neugeborenen. *Rehabilitacia (Supp)* 10: 53-57.

Peter Fysh, DC
San Jose, California

Editor's Note: Dr. Fysh is currently conducting pediatric seminars. You may contact him at
1-800-999-7337.

Click [here](#) for more information about Peter Fysh, DC.



Page printed from:

http://www.chiroweb.com/mpacms/dc/article.php?id=40042&no_paginate=true&p_friendly=true&no_b=true