

Chiropractic and Obesity

Chiropractic methods are traditionally sought after for pain relief for neuromusculoskeletal conditions or from pain arising from the nervous and musculoskeletal systems. But in the tradition of chiropractic, the WHOLE PERSON is cared for, not just a select region of pain. For example, when a low back pain patient first comes to the office, their history form includes detailed information about their overall health, not just their chief complaint (eg. "low back pain"). A thorough case history form will ask about past accident history, past hospitalizations, current medication list, family and social histories, occupational history, habit history, and a review of all the body's systems (cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine, EENT, genitourinary, skin, digestive, blood/lymphatic, and more). Doctors of chiropractic treat the WHOLE person so when obesity is present in a patients, they see treating it as part of the healing process. Granted, the main focus is usually given to the primary or chief complaint, but we must look at all the reasons as to why the low back hurts, especially since, in MOST cases, the cause of low back pain (LBP) is multimodal (there is more than one single cause), though the LAST activity prior the back "...going out," typically gets the blame. Also, most of us who have had LBP have had it more than once. In fact, most studies report that if you've had LBP in the past, you can EXPECT to have it again. That is why you your doctor to examine and identify ALL the possible reasons as to why the back was injured and manage everything they can.

In addition to all the historical information gathered, a family history of obesity is very relevant in these cases. Also, thyroid deficiency can make weight loss next to impossible since it regulates our metabolic rate and when sluggish, we simply can't break down fat efficiently and fluid is usually retained (another cause for weight gain). Your doctor of chiropractic may ask what you and your family typically eat. Is it "fast food" or does it consist of whole foods in a well-balanced diet? How about snacking habits? These can "undo" a lot of good if there are abuses in that department. Chiropractors will often integrate exercises into the treatment plan as regaining flexibility, strength, stamina, and coordination ALL help, not only the LBP, but also allows for aerobic activity to be better tolerated and enjoyed. If you experience pain every time you get up to walk, you will react by modifying or stopping that activity.

To continue the example above, doctors of chiropractic will look at all possible causes for low back pain and address things like a short leg, flat/pronated feet, knee, hip, and pelvic issues as all of these can affect the frequency, intensity, and duration of LBP. These possible issues can also impede one's efforts to exercise, and in fact, may worsen every time they try. Your doctor must FIRST reduce the "cause" of the LBP by decreasing inflammation ("RICE": rest, ice, compress, elevate). He or she will manipulate within the patient's tolerance to restore spinal and extremity joint function so exercises do NOT hurt. They can then guide the patient in the process of integrating exercises into their lifestyle GRADUALLY so he or she can identify any exercise that may be too much for them at that particular time. Of course, nutritional consulting with diets that may include calorie counting / restriction diets, the "Paleo" or caveman diet, low carbohydrate diet, and many other options will be considered. Discussing what the patients has tried in the past that seemed to work, as well as those approaches that failed, is important so they don't waste time.

Chiropractors WANT to help patients find ways that can be continued for the long-term that they like, that make sense, and that work. THEN, the patient can be in control of their weight, their low back pain, and their lives.