

Chiropractic in Canada

There are more than 9,000 licenced chiropractors practicing in Canada. Each has completed a rigorous academic and practical education, including national standardized educational requirements, and passing a licencing examination to become a Doctor of Chiropractic (DC).

Canada's chiropractors are musculoskeletal experts who are trained to assess, diagnose, and treat patients experiencing musculoskeletal pain and dysfunction. Treatments are designed to relieve pain and prevent it from returning by addressing the root causes (versus symptoms). Chiropractic treatment of pain and dysfunction helps patients to be healthy, active and able to enjoy the activities important to them.

Canadian chiropractors follow evidence-informed practice principles to guide clinical decision making. By integrating their clinical expertise, patients' preferences and values, and the best available scientific evidence, they provide their patients with personalized care grounded in science.

Quick Facts:

- *Chiropractic is used by over 4.7 million Canadians each year.*
 - *An estimated 11 million Canadians suffer from at least one musculoskeletal condition every year; this is expected to increase to 15 million per year by 2031.*
 - *1/3 of all lost time at work is caused by back pain.*
 - *85% of workers will suffer back pain in their lifetime.*
 - *Musculoskeletal conditions are the second leading driver of both short-term and long-term disability claims in Canada.*
 - *According to Health Canada, the total direct (health care) and indirect (lost production) cost of chronic pain in 2019 was \$38.2 - \$40.3 billion. By 2030, the total cost is expected to increase by 36.2% and reach \$55 billion.*
 - *Health Canada estimates a 1% annual reduction in the number of Canadians living with chronic pain could yield an average annual saving of \$165.2 - \$188.5 million in direct costs, and an average annual saving of \$232.6 million in indirect costs between 2020 to 2030. The estimated present value of cumulative savings in direct and indirect cost is \$3.5 - \$3.7 billion over the 10-year period.*
 - *1 in 8 Canadians are diagnosed with chronic back pain.*
 - *Health Canada estimates that the total number of individuals living with chronic pain will increase by 17.5% from 2019 to 2030.*
 - *Health Canada estimates that a 3% to 5% annual improvement in functionality and related improvements in production (i.e., unemployment and absenteeism), among individuals living with activity-limiting chronic pain could result in an average annual saving of \$132.4 million to \$217.4 million in indirect costs between 2020 and 2030. The estimated present value of cumulative savings in indirect costs is in the range of \$1.2 to \$1.9 billion over the 10-year period.*
 - *In Canada, it is estimated that medical expenditure on lower back pain costs \$6 billion to \$12 billion annually.*
 - *72.9% of chronic pain sufferers report that pain interferes with their work duties*
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What chiropractors do as spine, muscle, and nervous system experts?

The assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and preventative care of disorders originating from the muscular, skeletal and nervous systems.

Who can benefit from chiropractic care?

Chiropractic care is primarily a hands-on, non-invasive, and drugless practice that is safe and effective for the management of musculoskeletal conditions in all populations. Musculoskeletal conditions can range in intensity from minor to severe pain and in duration from acute to chronic or degenerative conditions. For example, acute or chronic back and neck pain, headaches, or arthritis, to name a few.

Education, Training, and Research

The education and training of chiropractors focuses largely on the musculoskeletal system and related structures. Among regulated healthcare professions, chiropractors have more extensive knowledge and training in the musculoskeletal system and related structures than other professions.

Canadian Doctors of Chiropractic (DCs) undertake an extensive four-year academic and practical program to allow them to become licensed practitioners. **With 4,200 hours of education, training and research dedicated to the spine, muscle and nervous system, Canada's chiropractors are experts on how to restore and improve the function of the musculoskeletal system.**

- Curriculum at both Canadian chiropractic colleges – the Canadian Chiropractic Memorial College in Toronto and the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières - is rigorous and provides the in-depth knowledge vital to developing competent chiropractors.
- Curriculum in years one and two focus on foundational courses in the biological sciences.
- Professional courses in chiropractic skills, clinical education, public health, health ethics, and practice management begin in year one and become emphasized in years three and four.

For a chiropractor to practice in Canada, they must pass a series of exams to obtain a certificate from the Canadian Chiropractic Examining Board (CCEB). A CCEB certificate is required by Provincial Regulatory Boards for chiropractors who wish to apply for provincial licensure. The certificate is a three-part exam that tests an applicant's chiropractic knowledge, clinical decision making, and clinical skills.

Components of the CCEB examination test chiropractic applicants on their ability to recognize the physical and psychosocial needs of patients, co-manage and/or refer to the appropriate health professionals when applicable, in addition to exploring the relevant personal and social determinants of health with the patient.

The CCEB certification ensures a national standardization of chiropractic education and examination. Chiropractors are trained and tested to recognize the frequent coexistence between musculoskeletal and mental disorders.

Research has been a key part of the chiropractic profession in Canada for decades. Since 1976, the Canadian Chiropractic Research Foundation (CCRF) has been funding chiropractic research to discover the best, evidence-informed treatments for patients living with pain and disability caused by musculoskeletal dysfunction and disease.

Over the past 20 years, the CCRF has worked with universities across Canada to establish CCRF Research Chairs focusing on the epidemiology origin and treatment of musculoskeletal disease and pain.

There are currently 13 CCRF Research Chairs located at the following universities:

- *University of Alberta, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine*
 - *University of British Columbia, Faculty of Education, School of Kinesiology*
 - *University of Guelph, Faculty of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences*
 - *University of Toronto, Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine**
 - *Two Research Chairs at University of Toronto*
 - *University of Manitoba, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management*
 - *University of Regina, Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies*
 - *Dalhousie University, Department of Health and Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine*
 - *McGill University, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Faculty of Medicine*
 - *Memorial University of Newfoundland, Faculty of Medicine*
 - *Queens' University, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Rehabilitation Therapy*
 - *University of New Brunswick, Faculty of Kinesiology*
 - *Ontario Tech University, Faculty of Health Sciences*
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Scope of Practice

The chiropractic profession is regulated in all 10 Canadian provinces. Licensed members are subject to the regulation, standards of practice, and guidelines enforced by their respective regulatory colleges. The chiropractic profession benefits from similar scopes of practice across Canadian jurisdictions, enhancing consistency of delivery of care and allowing for the mobility of patients.

Individual scopes of practice are available from provincial regulatory colleges; however, the scope of practice of chiropractors in most provinces includes items like the following:

- ✓ Provide primary care characterized by the evidence-informed conservative management of musculoskeletal disorders.
- ✓ Provide assessment, diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal system including the spine and other joints of the body and the associated tissues and nervous system.

- ✓ Use diagnostic skills to differentiate conditions to manage, co-manage, or refer.
- ✓ Provide expert therapeutic manipulation, adjustment or mobilization of the spine or other joints of the body by hand or by using devices.
- ✓ Use supportive and complementary therapeutic modalities.
- ✓ Provide advice, counseling and patient education on matters related to the condition of the spine or other joints of the body and the associated tissue, the nervous system, and the overall health of the individual.
- ✓ Provide advice and recommendations on the use of supportive and therapeutic devices such as back belts, knee and elbow braces, and orthotic footwear.

Modalities

Chiropractors are trained to use a variety of therapeutic modalities in addition to manual therapy, allowing them to customize their treatments to fit each patient's needs. Some commonly used modalities are:

- ✓ Rehabilitative and corrective exercise
- ✓ Electrothermal modalities such as laser, ultrasound, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), Interferential Current Therapy (IFC)
- ✓ Therapeutic taping
- ✓ Acupuncture (with additional training)
- ✓ Soft tissue therapy (ART and instrument assisted mobilization)
- ✓ Shockwave Therapy

The Importance and Value of Extended Health Care Coverage of Chiropractic

There are several key considerations that relate to the expertise of chiropractors which insurers and employers should consider when developing employee benefit offerings.

1. Chiropractors are experts in the assessment and diagnosis of musculoskeletal conditions and diseases such as acute and chronic MSK pain conditions (ex. arthritis, back and neck pain, and headaches)
2. Chiropractic is the only regulated profession across Canada with spinal manipulation as a core competency.
3. Chiropractors are the only regulated healthcare profession whose core educational and clinical focus is the musculoskeletal system.
4. Chiropractors have the broadest scope of practice for the management of musculoskeletal conditions among regulated healthcare professions.

5. Chiropractors are primary contact practitioners with the right to diagnose.
 - a. This means patients can access chiropractors directly.
 - b. Chiropractors can provide a diagnosis or clinical impression following their comprehensive assessment.
 - c. To confirm a diagnosis, chiropractors can refer for diagnostic imaging (i.e., x-ray, diagnostic ultrasound, etc. depending on the province of practice) or to an alternate healthcare provider when indicated.
6. Chiropractors are trained in numerous techniques and systems of manual therapies.
7. Chiropractors also provide preventative care.
 - a. Preventative care is important for many patients. It helps people with chronic conditions or sedentary lifestyles avoid severe and/or debilitating musculoskeletal episodes and provides ongoing relief for patients with lifestyles that increase their risk of musculoskeletal injury – athletes, for example.

A study looking at early intervention and preventative care found that preventative treatment for musculoskeletal conditions could:

- Reduce sick leave and lost work productivity by more than 50% among workers with musculoskeletal conditions; and reduce the risk of permanent work disability and job loss by up to 50%.ⁱ
 - Reduce the risk of developing a concurrent condition (e.g. depression); which also reduces lost time and productivity.ⁱⁱ
8. Chiropractic is an essential paramedical service that:
 - Improves value for employers and helps insurers manage costs
 - Promotes a healthy, productive workforce
 - Helps to lower treatment costs
 - Helps increase patient and client satisfaction

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