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Chiropractic Care For Children **By: Dr. Stephen O'Neil**

Dear Dr. Steve: How early should someone bring their children to see a chiropractor? Is it safe for children to be adjusted? J.H. Belle River

Dr. Steve: Chiropractic care was designed to promote wellness and proper function of the human body. This is achieved by aligning the spine, removing interference from the nervous system and allowing the body's full health potential to be expressed. This is vital for health at any age to counteract the many stressors we encounter in our lives. The question is then, when does stress begin influencing and affecting our nervous system and overall well being?

The answer for some may be that first fall at a hockey game. For some the first tumble when learning to walk. For others it may be at the time of birth. For some, these stressors may have been manifesting even before birth depending on the position of the developing fetus. Physical stressors on a baby begin at birth, with many children being pulled, twisted and contorted during delivery using hands, forceps or suction. These actions can have severe and long lasting effects on the tiny, still developing nervous system. Chemical stressors on children come in the form of drugs, either passed from the mother to the fetus or given to the child at birth. Other chemical stressors include inoculations, which for most children are given early in life and in several doses. The combination of these assaults on a child's nervous system can have plenty of adverse effects on their immediate and long-term health.

Children therefore should see their chiropractor as soon as possible after birth for a nervous system and spinal check-up. If caught early enough, most of the ill effects from birth trauma or other stressors can be avoided or minimized. Making sure a child's spine is properly aligned can give children the proper head start they require to flourish and excel through the early years of life.

Chiropractic adjustments for children and babies are very safe. Adjusting a baby and an adult are two very different things. A child is first assessed for restriction or misalignments in the spine. These areas of the spine are then isolated and a gentle pressure is applied to the restricted joint. It is so gentle in fact, that babies often sleep through the treatment. In addition, babies generally respond to chiropractic care much quicker than that of an adult. Their spines have generally not yet become ridden with scar tissue or chronic inflammation and most issues resolve quickly. This can give a child the necessary foundation for optimal growth now and later in life.