



# Wellness News Network™

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## Chiropractic - Children and Chronic Pain

Presented by:

### Introduction

Your chiropractor is well versed in chronic pain, as it is a widespread but often under-reported health problem. Its impact on society is enormous. In the US alone, the costs are approaching \$535 to \$635 billion annually (healthcare and lost productivity).<sup>1</sup> Among those that suffer from chronic pain are children. Children who suffer from chronic pain may miss school, withdraw from activities and suffer from anxiety or other issues like low self-esteem. A comprehensive study by Dr. Sara King, reviewed the literature on chronic pain for children and adolescents.<sup>2</sup> This study revealed, the problem of chronic pain in children is now affecting more kids than in the past.



The review also found girls experience chronic pain more often than boys; however, the reasons for this remain unclear.

Chronic pain is often associated with a range of injuries and diseases. Various medical associations and institutes have different definitions as to what constitutes chronic pain but generally it is described as pain that continues well beyond the normal healing stage of acute pain. Chronic pain can be continuous or it can be episodic. While diseases, such as arthritis, can contribute to the emergence of chronic pain, sometimes the cause can be a complete mystery. The most prevalent pain condition in kids is headache - other pain problems noted are abdominal pain and musculoskeletal pain.

The Dr. Sara King study was conducted by researchers from Dalhousie University and IWK Health Centre in Halifax, Canada. They examined the studies on pain that have occurred since the first published work of Goodman and McGrath in PAIN in 1991. In total they looked at 32 studies. The researchers found pain prevalence

### QUESTION?

How many children suffer chronic pain?

- A) 15%
- B) 20%
- C) 30%

**ANSWER:** C) 30%

### True or false?

Girls suffer from chronic pain more often than boys

**ANSWER:** True

### QUESTION?

Which factors influence chronic pain development?

- A) Depression
- B) Anxiety
- C) Low self-esteem
- D) All of the above

**ANSWER:**  
D) All of the above

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rates tended to increase with age. Girls were more affected than boys. Headaches were the most common type of pain in youth (23%), while other types of pain (abdominal, back, musculoskeletal) were less frequently studied. The researchers did find the rate children and adolescents were experiencing pain to be of concern.

## Chronic Pain Treatment Can Be a Challenge

Just like adults, children may suffer additional disadvantages as a result of chronic pain. They are more likely to miss school, avoid or withdraw from extracurricular activities and develop mental health problems.

Despite the increasing rate of chronic pain among children, there are a number of obstacles that make treating kids for this health condition a challenge. Young children may not have the verbal skills to express their pain. Even when they can, kids may want to avoid seeing a doctor and so don't share their pain with parents. Without verbal cues from their children, parents may not notice chronic pain issues as many kids can carry on normally. However, consistent untreated pain in childhood boosts the risk of numerous health problems emerging in adulthood.

As well, physicians may not be knowledgeable in the management of long-term pain in children. Chronic pain treatment is more often associated with adults – as increases in age make this type of health problem more likely to develop.

## Clues for Parents

What can a parent do to detect pain problems in his or her child? Keep an eye open for some of these behaviors ...

- Changes to appetite
- Changes to sleep patterns
- Weight loss
- Irritability
- Avoiding social activities
- Less physically active
- Fever
- Sweating
- Flushed skin
- Shallow or fast breathing

If your child shows these symptoms, ask him if he is in pain and where the pain occurs in his body, and then consult your chiropractor.

## Conclusion

Your chiropractor knows pain is often intimately linked to your body's central nervous system. For example, when you experience nerve interference in the spine (subluxations), extra irritation to the nervous system could cause a signal that is interpreted as pain, when normally the same signal would not in the absence of subluxations. By correcting the subluxation, your chiropractor normalizes nervous system tone. This is why it is important to have regular adjustments to help keep your nervous system in optimal condition and prevent pain before it starts!

## Quote to Inspire

*"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."*

*- Helen Keller*

## References and sources:

1. AAPM Facts and Figures on Pain – American Academy of Pain Medicine, [www.painmed.org](http://www.painmed.org).

2. The Epidemiology of Chronic Pain in Children and Adolescents Revisited: A Systematic Review -PAIN, 2011; 152 (12): 2729 DOI: 10.1016/j.pain.2011.07.016.



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