

Pregnancy and Chiropractic

By Martha Collins, D.C.



As I write this today, two of our beautiful practice members are awaiting the arrival of new additions to their families. Adjusting women through pregnancy is one of the most rewarding parts of our work, because a healthier pregnancy means an easier labour and delivery, and a better transition for the baby into this life.

On Monday night at our workshop, a young woman told the story of the traumatic birth of her son, and the subsequent eight years of poor health he has suffered as a result. She was unaware that Chiropractic care through pregnancy would have given him a better start, and angry that she didn't know this prior to her son's conception. I promised her I'd get the word out. This article is dedicated to her and her son with the intent that this information will prevent another mother and child years of heartbreak.

Chiropractic care through pregnancy is not only safe, it is essential. We can look at the implications of subluxation from a bio mechanical, hormonal and neurological standpoint. It is easy for all of us to see postural changes through pregnancy-the centre of gravity changes, the weight of the baby places increased pressure on the spine and pelvis, and towards the end of the pregnancy, changes are seen in gait pattern-the "waddle." What we can't see, are the millions of different hormonal changes and chemical reactions occurring both in the mother and the developing baby--all of which are controlled and coordinated through the nervous system.

Adjustments result in easier pregnancy, significantly decreased mean labour time, and assists new mothers back to prepartum health. In one study, women receiving Chiropractic care through their first pregnancy had 24% shorter labour times than the group not receiving Chiropractic, and multiparous subjects reported 39% shorter labour times. Thirty-nine percent-that's a massive difference. In addition, 84% of women report relief of back pain during pregnancy with Chiropractic care. Because the sacroiliac joints of the pelvis function better, there is significant less likelihood of back labour when receiving Chiropractic care through pregnancy.

Body position during delivery is also critical. Any late second stage labour position that denies postural sacral rotation denies the mother and the baby critical pelvic outlet diameter and jams the tip of the sacrum up to 4cm into the pelvic outlet. In other words, the popular semi-recumbent position places the labouring woman on her back onto the apex of the sacrum, which closes off the vital space needed for the baby to get through the pelvic outlet.

This delivery position is the main reason why so many births are traumatic-labour is stalled, the mom becomes fatigued and overwhelmed by pain, so the utilization of epidurals, forceps, episiotomy, vacuum extraction and cesarian increases. Just consider the analogy my husband uses-how hard would it be to have a bowel movement while lying on your back? You're right, very hard, and it may not happen. This is why squatting is the preferred position-gravity works to help and the pelvic outlet can open to a greater degree. Squatting during delivery results in decreased use of forceps and a shorter second stage of labour than the semi-recumbent position.

Greater complications during delivery result in greater neurological insult to the newborn due to injury to the head and neck. Even after vaginal births, 4.6% of term neonates suffer unexplained brain bleeds and 10% suffer neonatal encephalopathy. Because so many children had been injured with forceps deliveries, (facial nerve palsy, tearing of cervical spine musculature) vacuum extraction was developed. Suction cups are placed on the newborn's head, and the baby is literally sucked out of the mother.

When utilized, 120 pounds of pressure goes through the baby's head and neck. Decapitation occurs at 140 pounds of pressure, to give you an idea of the high forces involved. Remember when you were a little girl or boy and there was a new baby you were being introduced to? Our parents always said, "Watch his head-you don't want to hurt him." We're careful because the fontanelles of the skull are so pliable, and the neck and brain are fragile and unprotected. This is why so many babies sustain injuries to their heads and neck during vacuum extraction-the force is far greater than their little bodies can tolerate.

Adjustments to newborns contain only ounces of force. But that force is directed into the spine to facilitate health and remove subluxations. We adjust babies as soon after birth as possible, to alleviate subluxations caused by in-utero constraint and the journey down through the birth canal. There has been a lot in the media lately about children not needing Chiropractic care, but there is no better way to get a head start in life. As you all know, Chiropractic care is not a cure for anything-it is a system of wellness to help us be who we're supposed to be. It is not a cure for ear infections, for colic, for allergies, for asthma, for frequent colds, nor for ADD/ADHD.

When we listen to mothers' stories of their pregnancy, labour and delivery, the children who suffer the most from the above complaints, are the ones who've had the greatest trouble with their births. Even relatively easy deliveries can result in subluxations. That's why every child should be checked, before problems with their health even develop. That's preventive care in the truest sense-preventing subluxations in mothers to prevent subluxations in their babies during childbirth. This is why every woman needs Chiropractic through pregnancy-so that the arrival of their baby is a "wonderful experience", as one of my patients told me last week, after her son was born.

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Dr. Martha Collins is a Family Chiropractor practicing in Kingston, Ontario with her husband Dr. Carl Weber. She is committed to spreading the message of Chiropractic around the world so we can all lead healthier, happier lives.