

CHIROPRACTIC TERMS A – Z

A

ABDOMEN – The front of the body between the chest and the pelvis.

ACTIVATOR – The small adjusting tool used by chiropractors.

ACUTE – Relatively short term, often severe injury.

ADJUSTMENT – any of various manual and mechanical interventions, most often applied to the spine, in which controlled and directed forces are applied to a joint to correct structural dysfunction and restore normal nerve function.

ANTALIGIC POSTURE – An abnormal body position in an attempt to minimise pain and the body trying to 'right' itself.

ANTERIOR – Towards the front of the body.

ARTICULATION – The connection of bones, a joint.

ATLAS – The uppermost vertebra of the spine, the first cervical vertebra.

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM – The part of the nervous system that regulates involuntary action. (For example as in the heart, intestines and glands). This is comprised of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system.

B

BILATERAL – Both sides of the body.

BIOMECHANICS – Mechanical laws to living structures.

BURSITIS – Inflammation of a bursa, which is a fluid filled sac located where friction would otherwise take place. (For example knee and shoulder).

C

CAT Scan – An imaging device that uses a narrow x-ray beam and a computer to create a 3-dimensional type of x-ray.

CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM – The brain and spinal cord.

CERVICAL – The vertebrae of the neck, usually seven bones.

CHRONIC – Persisting for a long period of time.

COCCYX – The small bones on the end of the sacrum.

COMPRESSIVE LESION – Malfunctioning spinal bone that results in pressure on a spinal nerve, resulting in decreased nerve transmission.

CONGENITAL – Existing at birth.

D

DIAGNOSIS – To distinguish one health problem from another.

DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING – The uses of x-rays, MRI, CAT Scans, thermography to create a picture of the human body.

DISC – The cartilage cushion pad that separates the spinal vertebrae, absorbs shocks to the spine and protects the nerve systems and assists in creating the four spinal curves. Also known as the intervertebral disc.

DISC HERNIATION – Bulging of the soft nucleus pulposus into a defect area of fibrous disc exterior.

DISEASE – Deviation from the normal structure or function of any part or system of the body that is characterised by a set of symptoms.

E

EDEMA – Fluid fills a damaged joint causing swelling.

EMG (*Electromyogram*) - a device used to measure muscle tone and vertebral subluxation patterns by the use of electrical activity.

EXAMINATION – Inspecting and testing the body and its systems for the presence or absence of disease or injury.

EXTENSION – to stretch out to its fullest length of reach.

F

FACET JOINT- The small joints located between and behind each vertebra.

FLEXION – To bend forward.

FORAMEN – A small opening.

FRONTAL – Pertaining to the forehead.

H

HEALTH – A state of optimal physical, mental and social wellbeing and not only the absence of disease.

HYPERMOBILITY – Excess movement of an area of the spine.

HYPOMOBILITY – Restricted movement of an area of the spine.

I

IMPAIRMENT – Loss, alteration or abnormality of structure or function.

INFERIOR – Lower in position.

INFLAMMATION – A reaction of soft tissue due to injury that may include discomfort, swelling, heat, increased blood supply and malfunction.

INTERVERTEBRAL FORAMINA – The small openings between each vertebra for the nerve root to exit through from the spinal cord.

K

KYPHOSIS – The curve seen in the thoracic spine when viewed from the side.

L

LATERAL – Seen from the side.

LIPPING – The development of tiny outgrowths.

LORDOSIS – From the side, the curve of the lumbar and cervical spines.

LUMBAR – The lower back vertebrae, usually five bones.

M

MAINTENANCE CARE – Type of chiropractic care designed to maintain a patient's improved state of health and spinal function.

MRI (*Magnetic Radiological Imaging*) – A device using strong magnets and radio waves to create an image of the internal structures of the body.

N

NEURAL CANAL – The opening in the spine through which the spinal cord passes.

NEUROLOGICAL – Pertaining to the nervous system. A Neurologist is a Medical Doctor who is a specialist of the nervous system.

NUCLEUS PULPOSUS – The gelatinous mass in the centre of the disc.

O

OBLIQUE – Diagonal.

OCCIPUT – The bone at the base of the skull that articulates with the first cervical vertebra.

ORTHOPEDIST – A Medical Doctor who specializes in the preservation and restoration of the skeletal system and its articulations.

P

PALPATION – Examining the spine with your fingers.

PATHOLOGY – A process of disease.

PAEDIATRICS – The care of infants and children and the treatment of their diseases.

PERIPHERAL NERVOUS SYSTEM – The nervous system that connects the central nervous system with every cell, tissue and organ of your body.

PHYSIOTHERAPY – Treatment with physical and mechanical means.

POSTERIOR – toward the back of the body.

PREVENTATIVE CARE – Health care that focuses on early detection and treatment.

PROGNOSIS – A prediction of the probable course and outcome of a disease or the likelihood of recovery from a disease.

PRONE – Lying horizontal and face down.

R

RADIOGRAPH – An x ray film. A specially sensitised film that records the internal structures of the body.

RANGE of Motion – The range through which a joint can move, measured in the degrees of a circle.

REFLEX – An involuntary action resulting from a stimulus.

S

SACRUM – The triangular bone at the base of the spine.

SCIATICA – A pain that radiates from the back into the buttocks and into the leg caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve, the largest nerve of the body.

SCOLIOSIS – A sideways curve of the spine when viewed from the back.

SLIPPED DISC – An incorrect name for a condition in which the disc becomes wedge-shaped and bulges. In extreme cases this pressure may cause the disc to rupture.

SPASM – A contraction of muscle.

SPINOUS PROCESS – The posterior protruding part of a spinal bone that can be seen and felt when examining the spine.

SPURRING - A projecting body, as from a bone.

SUPERIOR – Upper or higher position.

SUPINE – To lay horizontal and face upward.

T

TECHNIQUE – A specific procedure or method used to correct spinal problems.

THERAPY – Methods used to assist in the pain relief, rehabilitation and restoration of normal body functions.

THORACIC – The part of the spinal column from the base of the neck to the top of the lower back.

TRACTION – The act of drawing or exerting a pulling force.

TRANSVERSE PROCESS – The lateral protrusions of bone from the vertebrae to which muscles attach.

TRIGGER POINT – An involuntary band of tight muscle that is painful when pressed and can cause referred pain to other parts of the body.

U

ULTRASOUND – High frequency inaudible sounds whose vibrations can be used for heating internal structures of the body.

V

VERTEBRA – Any of the individual bones of the spinal column.

W

WELLNESS CARE – Health care that is not prompted by sickness or injury but by an attempt to promote an optimum state of physical, mental and social well-being.

WHIPLASH – An injury to the cervical spine caused by an abrupt jerking motion of the head, either backward or forward.

X

X-RAYS – Electromagnetic radiation that can penetrate many objects and reveal their internal structure by recording the shadow cast on photographic plates.