

Chiropractors check leg length for signs of imbalance

Question: Why do chiropractors check the length of your legs before and or after an adjustment?

Answer: Leg-length checks are utilized in many different chiropractic techniques. Some chiropractors check the leg length in the supine position (lying on your back) and some in the prone position (lying on your stomach). The main purpose of checking leg length is to determine potential postural distortions in the overall structure of the body. While you are standing weight bearing is forcing your feet to touch the ground and postural distortions are visible with hip height and shoulder height asymmetries yet it is difficult to determine what is causing the postural changes. When checking leg length without weight bearing the imbalances are more readily observed. Some techniques employ the chiropractor to have the patient turn his or her head from side to side or up and down while observing changes in the leg length. Others lift the legs at the knee to determine changes in leg length. The trained eye of the chiropractor is searching for the cause of distortions in the spine, pelvis, knees, or ankles. The changes may be very minute or can be dramatic based on that individual patient's condition on that day. Patterns in particular conditions assist the doctor in making certain adjustments to the spine or extremities. Following the corrections to the patient's body the chiropractor will re-check the leg length to determine if balance has returned to that patient.

It is sometimes difficult for the average lay person to observe the same changes the experienced chiropractor sees. The testing is very objective yet

reproducible to a professional. The original testing of leg length was done specifically on pediatric patients and was called the Allis (aka Galeazzi) test, to determine gross deformity in leg conditions. Specific measuring of persistent leg length deficiency can assist the doctor in determining the need for orthotics or lifts. Any individual test without supportive diagnostic assistance is invalid.

Besides the leg length test, most chiropractors will palpate the spinal joints and surrounding soft tissue as well as observe the patient's gait or muscle test for over or under utilized muscle functions.

The best results start with a comprehensive consultation including a complete patient history, examination and X-rays if necessary. Chiropractors are educated to specialize in determining postural distortions and their cause.

Quote of the week: *"Think of others twice as much as you think of yourself."* - Anthony Gatto