“Why Should I See a Chiropractor and How Do I Choose One?”

Table of Contents
- Intro
- Why Should I See a Chiropractor
- Ok, So How Do I Choose A Chiropractor?
- Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

All traceurs *need* a good chiropractor.

How can I say that? Because by our very nature, we traceurs hurt ourselves, take impact, and do things that by any other standard, are beyond human ability. What we don’t realize, is the toll that Parkour takes on our bodies. Most of us at some point thought ourselves invincible, I did. But at some point in ever traceur’s life, they realize they aren’t, usually when it’s too late.

This article is for those mature enough to realize that in order to train and develop in Parkour efficiently, you must take care of your body for optimal performance. Until you realize this, you can never progress enough to reach even half your full potential. This article covers a health care professional that can change EVERYTHING about your performance level, better and more effectively than any other professional.

Why Should I See a Chiropractor?

First, let’s cover generally what a Chiropractor is. A Chiropractor is a doctor of functional neurology and the musculoskeletal system.

“What does that mean?”

It means a Chiropractor knows more than anyone else about your muscles, your spine, your joints, and the nerves behind them. A Chiropractor is portal of entry, which basically means that their knowledge is broad enough to refer to any specialist in the case of emergency or red flags (ie. Cancer, serious neural defects etc etc). In other words, your MD knows *squat* compared to a Chiropractor in what traceurs deal with every day. MDs are specialists of internal medicine, this means organs. It would be like learning from a gymnast how to roll properly on concrete…

In the same way, you would never go to a Chiropractor to get antibiotics. Basically, see a MD for what MDs know best, see a Chiropractor for what a Chiropractor knows best. Now, I won’t spend too much time, but a question comes up: “What about PTs?”
Right now, PTs are NOT portal of entry. You can’t see one without a referral. Besides that, PTs (as of now) are not doctors, they are given instructions with some liberality to work around those instructors sent to them by the Chiropractor or MD. A PT is a specialist of rehabilitation. In other words, after a serious injury. What a Chiropractor does is see that the condition needs a lot of time, and hard work to rehabilitate, and sends it to the PT. If you’re seeing a good Chiropractor, the need for a PT should be minimal, because your catching the problems early, and preventing them from getting so bad you need a PT.

“So what does a Chiropractor do?”

Wow, that’s a loaded question. In general, a Chiropractor takes care of your joint alignment and the health of your nervous system. Like a dentist, he checks your spine for “cavities” and keeps your bones and joints from degenerating due to misuse. They adjust your joints, which often get jammed, and they neurologically facilitate your muscles to keep them functionally adaptable. This means: sprains, strains, knee pain, shoulder pain, wrist pain, back pain, hip pain, foot pain, etc etc. If you have pain, you’ve waited too long (unless your talking about the latest kong you missed, and landed on your neck instead of your feet… or hands, depending on which part of the kong your talking about).

In several parts of the body you do not have pain fibers to tell you you’re damaging something. Namely meniscus, discs of the spine, and several joints. These parts of your body will tear to pieces before you even feel pain. All you notice is that weird clicking and popping, and pain in that inside knee that hurts when you bend down at certain angles. Or the wrist that is stiffer than before, and aches when you bend it back. Or the fingers that go numb during the night. Or the neck that just won’t turn anymore.

Sound familiar to anyone? These problems and hundreds more are the Chiropractor’s bread and butter, they fix these complaints every day. Something that neither a MD(who could block the pain with drugs—that’ll help…) or PT(who would ice, ultrasound, massage, and laser the thing) can fix. We traceurs, when we landed wrong, hammered a joint out of alignment because the joint was used wrong, and like a car’s wheels out of alignment, it wears away at the tires until the tire falls apart and you can’t run anymore. Sadly, we only have one body and, you can’t just go out and buy a new “tire”.

Take care of your body, with someone who knows what he’s talking about with YOUR condition. There is a reason that Chiropractic is the 3rd largest health profession in the US. There is a reason that nearly every major athletic team of professional level there is a team Chiropractor. There is a reason that even insurance companies are turning to Chiropractors because Chiropractors save money… Regardless, for us traceurs, you can’t have perfect technique, not without making mistakes and learning proper technique. And with mistakes, it takes a toll.

I, used to think I was good at impact without rolling, I didn’t have to roll, I had strong legs and ankles, I couldn’t be hurt. Then I saw my x-rays: big deep impacted holes into my spinal vertebrae. See, the fluid between the bones of my spine follows the laws of
physics, fluid can’t be compressed and it is stronger than bone. And even though I didn’t feel any pain, I was paying for my ego.

I don’t do big drops anymore.

But I wouldn’t have ever known without it being pointed out to me. I plan on training my whole life. Parkour is a part of ME. I’d hate to quit because I didn’t know better. Stay healthy, don’t wait until your tire explodes, or your teeth fall out.

**Ok, So How Do I Choose a Chiropractor?**

Chiropractic, like all health care, has good and bad doctors. Sadly, Chiropractic is a young profession, and bad news spreads faster than good news. Some Chiropractors are scum, pure and simple just like any profession (dentists, MDs, etc). But not ALL Chiropractors are scum. If you have a bad experience with a chiropractor, go see a different chiropractor.

These are a few things to look for in finding a good chiropractor (note: these are all my opinions. There are always exceptions to the rule. Following these guidelines will help, but does not guarantee your experience):

**What to look for:**


- **Wait List** - If a Chiropractor has a waitlist, that’s a good sign. It means that so many people want to see him/her that the Chiropractor isn’t starving for patients. It means that no matter if you come in or not, the Chiropractor doesn’t loose or gain anything. It means that most likely, your health is all that he/she cares for. Wait for these docs, it’s worth it, and a valuable find. Often these docs are screening YOU to see if they want you as their patient because they have so many, that any headache is not worth it for the Chiropractor.

- **Cash only** – Combining a wait list with cash only is a near guaranteed bet that the doctor is excellent. This means you pay out of pocket and it is more expensive for you. What it also means is that the doctor does not need insurance to survive. The doctor is helping patients so much that they refer all their friends and family. In my experience, these are the best Chiropractors, and they are worth every penny.

- **Passion** - All people radiate what they believe. If a Chiropractor believes in what he does you can see it. If the Chiropractor is a businessman and wants to maximize his yield, you can sense that too.

- **Extremities** - This is probably the least important to most normal patients, but we, are not normal patients. Your Chiropractor must be able to adjust extremities, because most your injuries will originate from your wrists/ankles/shoulders/knees. Make sure your Chiropractor is a competent extremities adjustor.

**What to avoid:**
• “The rest of your life” Chiropractor- Some Chiropractors want you to come in the rest of your life, three times a week. Scum scum scum. Put these guys out of business. The only time you should come in three times a week is for a SERIOUS problem, like you can’t even walk. And even then, no more than a few weeks MAX.
• Pre-pay and save!- Chiropractors who want you to pay upfront for “as many adjustments as you want” or for such and such number of treatments, they are telling you that their patients aren’t happy enough to stay with them and refer patients to them. It means that they have to milk every patient for as much money as possible to survive before the patient quits on them.
• Assembly line Chiropractic- Avoid Chiropractors who spend five minutes or less on a patient. I don’t care who you are, you can’t do a good job with only five minutes. These are the Chiropractors who do the same thing to every patient. It doesn’t matter what you have. Usually they have tons of staff, and tons of extra docs in the office too, they have the business down to an art. Therefore the term assembly line Chiropractic.
• Spinal Screenings- So you meet a guy at the fair, who wants to screen your spine. In fact, he wants you to sign up now and even gives you a free initial consultation. This means one of two things: the chiropractor is fresh out (not necessarily a bad thing), or they are dying for patients. If they are new, I still don’t think spinal screenings are the way to go, but they might be ok. If they’ve been practicing for “so and so” years, run. Pure and simple.
• Scare Tactics- Don’t go to someone who claims you’ll die without Chiropractic care. You may be in pain, you may suffer, but you won’t die. There are various degrees of this, but go to a Chiropractor because you want to be healthier, not because you’re afraid if you don’t it means life and death.

Just by following these guidelines you’ll have a pretty good chance of finding a great Chiropractor. In addition, these following guidelines are things I personally look for and are by no means an absolute:

• Muscle Testing- Look particularly for “PAK” or “AK”. This stands for Applied Kinesiology. I have found some of the best docs in the field practicing these techniques. Some of the craziest, but some of the best too.
• Diversified- If I see that a chiropractor lists himself as “diversified” technique, it means that he doesn’t have a technique. My preference is to avoid these doctors, I don’t let them touch me. If they didn’t take the time to learn at least ONE technique in school outside the standard curriculum, I don’t want to let them touch me.
• 15 minute appointments- I find it hard to believe that a person can have a conversation, take notes, diagnose, and perform the treatment in less than 10 minutes. I like to have open communication and a relationship with my doctor. I don’t want to be just another face.
• Techniques- Doctors who know a lot of techniques have a lot of knowledge to draw on. If you see a doc who says “(blank technique) only”, I do tend to avoid
them. I want a doctor not put into a box, but capable of pulling out knowledge from all different sources.
  - Techniques that I love to see listed in their credits: SOT, AK, Drop, Activator, NET, CCEP, CCSP.
  - I tend to avoid techniques as listed: Gonstead, Diversified, Cox flexion/distraction, CBP.

Why do I avoid these techniques? Not because they are not good, but because for a traceur, they will be less effective for your common conditions.

**General Tips:**

- If you don’t like your Chiropractor, don’t disavow Chiropractic.
- See your Chiropractor BEFORE you hurt yourself
- Seeing your Chiropractor once a month should be a minimal standard
- Chiropractic can influence not only joints and injuries, but is good for overall health and wellbeing
- Don’t let an injury become chronic. Fix the problem immediately, before it gets bad.

**FAQ-**

*Is Chiropractic safe?*

Yes. Chiropractic has the lowest malpractice insurance of ALL health care. Chiropractors pay anywhere from 5000-10000 a year, compared to MDs that’s 5 to 20 times less. This means that the chances of Chiropractors hurting us are far less than taking over the counter drugs or driving a car. Most complaints about Chiropractic are myths such as being adjusted by a Chiropractor will give you a stroke. The chances of getting a stroke by Chiropractic neck manipulation is the same as turning your neck.

*What are those “pops” when he twists my body around?*

The pops are gas released from joints. The Chiropractic adjustment is not just a twisting to make things pop. The pop sometimes accompanies an adjustment, but doesn’t mean an adjustment.

*Why can’t I just adjust myself? I can make my neck pop just by twisting it?*

You can’t because you can’t diagnose the problem. As stated above, the pop doesn’t mean the adjustment. If you twist and pop your joints, you are likely doing damage to yourself. Have you noticed that every time you pop your neck, you have to do it more and more? That’s because your neck is getting unstable, and making yourself easier to injure. Don’t do it. And if your PT or massage therapist, or MD adjusts your neck, tell them to stop. They are doing you more damage without the proper training.
Then what's the difference?

What a Chiropractor does is find out where the problem is, and corrects it. If the Chiropractor does it correctly, you should have relief of symptoms and your neck will actually crack LESS. It will stabilize, and your muscles will function better. With time, your joints will be less stiff and pop less and less, you will get better, not worse. You’ll also notice with good Chiropractic care that you can jump higher, or your coordination improves, or you can react faster and your balance improves. The explanation to these benefits are long winded, but suffice to say, you’ll be able to do more, be more efficient, get faster, and feel stronger. With the wrong care, you can do the exact opposite, lose coordination, get weaker, develop more pain. Chiropractic takes years to master, even Chiropractors must consult a colleague to receive an adjustment and cannot adjust themselves.

What’s the education behind chiropractic?

A Chiropractor must go through (generally) an undergraduate degree, and four years of graduate school, with an internship period and successful passing of a four part national boards test, a PT national board test, and a state licensing exam. This is eight years plus of education after high school. And it’s hard. Very hard.

--Dr. Kenneth “PKChiro” Kao, D.C.