

Styles of Chiropractic Adjusting June, 2022

By Dr. Derek Conte

There are many techniques that have been developed since the advent of Chiropractic in 1895 by D.D. Palmer. The first adjustment helped restore the hearing of janitor Harvey Lillard that year. That first effort launched Palmer and his son, B.J., on a passionate path of tireless exploration.

Through an intense study of human anatomy, it became clear that the nerves that exited the spinal cord at different levels controlled different bodily functions: Movement of muscles, the activation and regulation of organs and glands, and all the special senses too, like vision, smell, taste, touch, hearing and balance.

They realized that the brain controlled these functions and concluded that, by using the bones of the spine as levers to correct spinal malpositions (which they would call “subluxations”, meaning “loss of light”); they could re-establish normal communication between the brain and the body via the spinal cord and spinal nerves and thereby restore normal function. It was, and remains, an elegant model for healing and maintaining optimal health, naturally.

Since then, many Chiropractic techniques have emerged, each with their own rationale while still maintaining the original Chiropractic principle: to clear the nervous system of interference. There are four general categories of Chiropractic techniques. Here are a few you can research:

- 1) Upper Cervical (upper neck only) which include Atlas Orthogonal, Grostic, NUCCA, Toggle, and Blair.
- 2) Foundational (full-spine), which include Diversified, Gonstead, Sacro-Occipital Technique (SOT).
- 3) Tonal (balance and nerve/muscle tone), which include SOT, Applied Kinesiology, CranioSacral Therapy, Chiropractic-Biophysics (CBP).
- 4) Instrument-based (hand held, moving tables, use of a stylus), which include Activator, Thompson Drop, COX flexion-distraction, Pierce.

Some Chiropractors also employ ‘extremity’ (extra spinal) adjusting of the peripheral joints of the body and this is very useful for the patient’s shoulders, knees, hips, elbows, ankles and wrists.

There are an estimated 200 Chiropractic “techniques”, but there is great overlap among these categories in my opinion and, therefore, I’ve presented the four major categories above as I feel simpler is better.

No two people are exactly the same. Some patients respond better to, or prefer, stronger or softer techniques. Some patients absolutely need softer or instrument-based techniques. Occasionally a deeper, more forceful adjustment is the key to helping a patient get better. These strategies should be discussed with the doctor. The Chiropractor you choose should be fluent in multiple styles and methods of adjusting as one-size never fits all.

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