



BABY BOOMERS URGED TO STRAIGHTEN UP AND STAY ACTIVE FOR A LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE

World Spine Day 16th October 2016

As part of World Spine Day (October 16th), the New Zealand Chiropractors' Association (NZCA) is urging the nation's baby boomers to take care of their spines as a key part of their regular healthcare regime and help reduce the future need for a massive increase in healthcare costs.

Chiropractor and NZCA spokesperson Dr Cassandra Fairest explains: 'A growing body of research suggests that chiropractic care may slow the rate of functional decline as you age, preserve your autonomy, improve your well-being and reduce accidents¹. It could also save New Zealand millions of dollars in the longer term.'

Baby boomers are those born during the years after World War II when there was a temporary marked increase in the birth rate (between 1946 and 1964). As the baby boomers enter retirement the number of people aged 65 and over will reach unprecedented levels. Baby boomers represent almost 15 percent of the population and the numbers continue to rise - outgrowing all other age groups, according to Statistics New Zealand (SNZ) figures. It is projected that in 2068, approximately 27.5 per cent of the total population will be aged over 65.

Dr Kelly Holt, Dean of Research at the New Zealand College of Chiropractic adds: 'As we age it becomes more difficult to carry out the basic tasks of everyday life such as eating, bathing, and dressing due to the decline in physical and cognitive function that often occur with ageing. Slowing the rate of functional decline in older adults preserves autonomy and well-being, and reduces the threat of expensive institutionalisation.¹'

A study conducted in the United States has shown that older adults who receive chiropractic care (compared with those who don't) maintain their ability to carry out their activities of daily living over several years^{[1],[2]}.

Dr Holt notes: 'Every year approximately one third of older people experience one or more falls. Falls are the leading cause of injury related hospital admissions and death in this age group. We conducted a research study in New Zealand which has shown chiropractic care in a group aged 65 to 89 can significantly impact several factors that influence the prevention of falls^[3].'

'After twelve weeks the group who received chiropractic care had increased ability in identifying where their ankle joint was when they closed their eyes. This is likely to prevent falls, as your brain will be more accurately aware of where your foot is without you having to look at your foot while walking.'

Dr Holt and his fellow researchers in the New Zealand study also found that older adults who received 12 weeks of chiropractic care were able to take a step much faster than the control group that did not receive chiropractic care. This is an important finding, because being able to take a fast step to correct balance can assist in fall prevention. And finally, this study showed that the older adults who received the chiropractic care were able to simultaneously process visual and auditory information more accurately in their brain.

Dr Fairest adds: 'This is known to be important and relevant when it comes to preventing falls. Science has shown that as we age we appear to lose our ability to process multiple lots of sensory information accurately and that this leads to distractions that may cause falls.'

'We want to encourage New Zealanders to visit their chiropractor to ensure that their spines and nervous systems are functioning well. A local NZCA chiropractor will be able to provide advice on ways to improve posture and support a healthy spine. A healthy spine and well-functioning nervous system is the key for overall health and wellbeing.'

Each year World Spine Day is observed on October 16th to encourage spinal health by disseminating information on good spinal health habits. The NZCA runs the Straighten Up New Zealand online resource www.straightenup.org.nz, which provides information for adults, children and healthcare professionals on ways to keep active and maintain spinal health by using the Just Start Walking and Straighten Up programmes.

Alongside professional care, the three-minute set of simple exercises recommended by Straighten Up New Zealand (SUNZ www.straightenup.org.nz) every day will also help to improve posture, stabilise core muscle groups, enhance health and prevent spinal disability.

Ends

Further Information:

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[1] Weigel, Hockenberry, Bentler, Wolinsky. The comparative effect of episodes of chiropractic and medical treatment on the health of older adults. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. Mar-Apr 2014;37(3):143-154.

[2] Weigel, Hockenberry, Wolinsky. Chiropractic use in the Medicare population: prevalence, patterns, and associations with 1-year changes in health and satisfaction with care. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. Oct 2014;37(8):542-551.

[3] Holt, Kelly R et al, "Effectiveness of Chiropractic Care to Improve Sensorimotor Function Associated With Falls Risk in Older People: A Randomized Controlled Trial," Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics.

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