

Inside This Issue

- What is a Disability
- Disability Facts
- Disabilities & Chiropractic
- Resources

The monthly Navigator is your way of reading about the national health subject of the month and "navigating" your way through what you should know to get and stay healthy. Enjoy!



Navigator December

December is Disabilities Awareness Month

DISCLAIMER. Representations in the Navigator issues are based on information gathered from multiple healthcare websites and advisors. The content is for Informational purposes only. We have not implied any representation confirming this information as accurate or complete. Readers are responsible to consult with their own healthcare advisors regarding their specific healthcare needs.



What is a Disability? A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). According to the WHO, disability has three dimensions:

1. Impairment in a person's body structure or function, or mental functioning; examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision or memory loss.
2. Activity limitation, such as difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving.
3. Participation restrictions in normal activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities, and obtaining health care and preventive services.



Background. Individuals with physical disabilities face significant barriers to accessing healthcare, despite legal and ethical obligations to ensure equal access to services. Complimentary medicine, including chiropractic care, is often seen as a supplement to conventional treatment, and integrating these approaches is essential for achieving optimal patient outcomes.

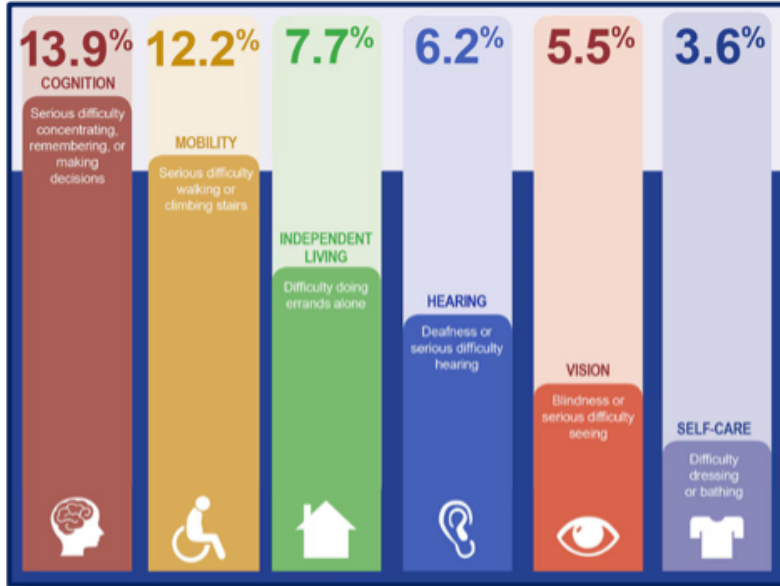
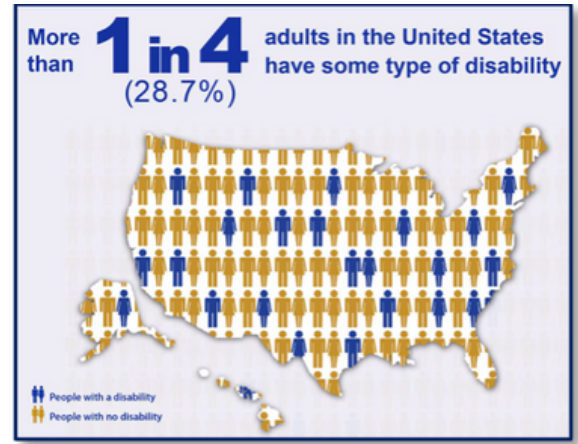
Chiropractors primarily provide treatment for pain relief in patients with physical disabilities, and these interventions may help improve and/or maintain mobility. Collaboration between chiropractors (holistic primary care providers or HPCPs) and medical general practitioners (primary care providers or PCPs) is often considered beneficial for providing comprehensive care.

Pain management is the most common reason disabled persons seek chiropractic treatment. Chiropractic care has been shown to be effective for chronic pain syndromes, suggesting that it may also benefit individuals with other disabling conditions. Disabled individuals often face challenges in accessing chiropractic services, and there is a need for improvements, particularly in terms of physical accessibility.



FACTS ABOUT DISABILITIES

Prevalence. Around 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the world's population, have a significant disability. In the United States, nearly 1 in 4 people, or 26%, have a disability.



Types of Disabilities. Disabilities can include physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. Some types of disabilities in the United States include:

- Cognition disability
- Mobility disability
- Independent living disability
- Deafness or hearing difficulty
- Vision disability
- Self-care disability

Disabilities and Health. Adults with disabilities are more likely to have obesity, smoke, have heart disease, and have diabetes:

- 40.5 percent of adults with a disability are obese while 30.3 percent of adults without a disability are obese.
- 20.9 percent of adults with a disability smoke while 10.2 percent of adults without a disability smoke.
- 10.4 percent of adults with a disability have heart disease while 3.7 percent of adults without a disability have heart disease.
- 16.6 percent of adults with a disability have diabetes while 7.9 percent of adults without a disability have diabetes.

Disability and HEALTH		
Adults with disabilities are more likely to		
	With Disabilities	Without Disabilities
HAVE OBESITY	40.5%	30.3%
SMOKE	20.9%	10.2%
HAVE HEART DISEASE	10.4%	3.7%
HAVE DIABETES	16.6%	7.9%



Disabilities and Healthcare Access. Healthcare access barriers for working-age adults include

- 1 in 4 adults with disabilities 18 to 44 years do not have a usual health care provider
- 1 in 4 adults with disabilities 18 to 44 years have an unmet health care need because of cost in the past year
- 1 in 6 adults with disabilities 45 to 64 years did not have a routine check-up in the past year.

Disabilities and Chiropractic Care

Experts suggest that biomechanical and structural issues in the spine can affect the nervous system. Since chiropractic care works to restore the proper alignment and function of the spine and surrounding structures, it helps alleviate neurological tension, ultimately soothing and balancing the nervous system.

Chiropractic care can provide significant relief for individuals with disabilities by addressing pain, improving mobility, and correcting spinal misalignments, muscular imbalances, and joint dysfunction. By enhancing overall well-being, chiropractic treatment becomes a valuable component of a comprehensive approach to managing disabilities. It is particularly beneficial for those with limited movement or pain resulting from these issues, helping to restore function and comfort.



The Role of Chiropractic Care in Enhancing Quality of Life for Individuals with Disabilities

- 1. Relieving Pain and Discomfort.** Chronic pain is a common challenge for many individuals with disabilities, often resulting from muscular imbalances, spinal misalignments, or joint dysfunction. Chiropractic care offers effective pain relief by utilizing techniques such as spinal adjustments, massage therapy, and rehabilitative exercises. These treatments help restore alignment, reduce pressure on nerves, and alleviate pain. By addressing the root causes of discomfort, chiropractic care provides long-term relief, improving daily function and quality of life for those with disabilities.
- 2. Improving Mobility and Function.** Limited mobility and reduced function are major hurdles for individuals with disabilities. Chiropractic care helps overcome these challenges by targeting joint restrictions, improving flexibility, and encouraging better movement patterns. Through spinal adjustments, soft tissue therapies, and tailored exercises, chiropractors can restore joint function and increase range of motion. This leads to improved mobility, allowing individuals to move with greater ease and engage more fully in daily activities, fostering greater independence and overall well-being.
- 3. Optimizing Nerve Function and Communication.** The nervous system is essential for coordinating body functions, and disruptions in nerve communication can create complications for individuals with disabilities. Chiropractic adjustments aim to correct spinal misalignments (subluxations) that may interfere with proper nerve function. By realigning the spine and relieving nerve compression, chiropractic care enhances nerve communication throughout the body resulting in better sensory perception, improved motor control, and a reduction in symptoms.
- 4. Supporting Holistic Well-being.** Chiropractic care takes a holistic approach to health, acknowledging the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and emotional well-being. For individuals with disabilities, addressing the unique challenges they face is key to improving overall quality of life. Chiropractors work closely with patients to develop personalized treatment plans that may include lifestyle adjustments, nutritional guidance, stress management techniques, and ergonomic improvements in their living environment. By focusing on these diverse aspects of health, chiropractic care supports individuals in achieving greater overall well-being and leading more fulfilling lives, regardless of their disabilities.

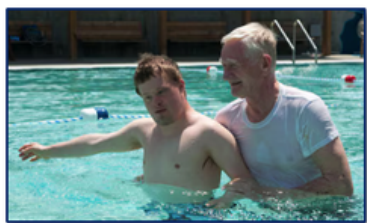
Resources for Helping Disabled Individuals

Preventing Work-Related Disabilities and Chiropractic Care. An increasing number of workers are turning to chiropractic care to prevent work-related disabilities. These conditions are often the result of years spent sitting at desks, working on computers or performing strenuous physical activities in their job.

Musculoskeletal pain, including lower back pain, is the number one reason for lost work time. Chiropractors are very useful in the treatment of lower back pain, neck pain, and sciatica. So, being treated by a chiropractor gets you back to work faster, and it might also be able to help you reduce the chances of becoming injured. Chiropractic care can help prevent work-related disabilities by alleviating or even eliminating symptoms such as pain, numbness, or tingling, all of which are often caused by spinal misalignment. When the body is properly aligned, it operates at its best, free from discomfort. Adjustments work by repositioning the vertebrae, relieving pressure on compressed vertebrae or pinched nerves. Once the pressure is released, the associated pain or tingling sensations typically subside.

However, spinal alignment alone isn't enough to maintain long-term relief. If the muscles that support the spine are weak or imbalanced, proper alignment may not be sustained. For this reason, chiropractors often recommend specific exercises to strengthen the back, neck, and abdominal muscles. Strengthening these muscle groups helps keep the spine properly positioned. In addition to exercises, common chiropractic treatments may include stretching, massage therapy, heat and ice therapy, and adequate rest—all of which contribute to healing and maintaining spinal health.

Physical Activity. Doctors can play a role in promoting physical activity among their patients with disabilities. Adults with disabilities were 82% more likely to be physically active if their doctor recommended it than if they did not get a doctor recommendation. However, only 44% of adults with disabilities who visited a doctor in the past year received a physical activity recommendation from their doctor. Adults with disabilities should talk to their doctor about the amounts and types of physical activity that are appropriate for their abilities.



Adults with disabilities should try to get at least 2 1/2 hours a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (i.e., brisk walking; wheeling oneself in a wheelchair) or at least 1.25 hours a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (e.g., wheelchair basketball, etc.). Muscle-strengthening activities should include all major muscle groups on two or more days/week (i.e., resistance-band, yoga) as these activities provide additional health benefits.

If a disabled person is not able to meet the physical activity guidelines, they should engage in regular physical activity based on their abilities and should avoid inactivity. Adults with disabilities should talk to their healthcare provider about the amounts and types of physical activity that are appropriate for their abilities.

Blood Testing for Disabilities. Blood tests can help diagnose developmental and intellectual disabilities by examining a patient's chromosomes. These tests analyze blood samples to identify chromosomal abnormalities associated with certain disabilities. The main goal is to assist doctors in diagnosing disabilities in children at an earlier stage, ensuring they receive the appropriate care and support. Talk to your doctor about whether blood tests are appropriate for a condition that concerns you.

Learning Disabilities. Learning disabilities can significantly affect the quality of life of the individuals affected. The five most common learning disabilities include: dyslexia, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and processing deficits.

More and more individuals are turning to alternative approaches to manage learning difficulties. Research shows that 30% of medications prescribed for learning disabilities and behavioral disorders show little to no significant positive results, with many children also experiencing unwanted side effects. As a result, more parents are seeking alternative, holistic treatments, with chiropractic care emerging as one such option.

One study observed the impact of chiropractic care in children with developmental delay syndromes such as dyspraxia, dyslexia, ADHD and other learning disabilities. They discovered an improvement in their performance, ability to control impulsivity, concentrate, and maintain focus and attention. Another study monitored children diagnosed with ADHD while undergoing chiropractic care. Their findings indicated an improvement in ADHD symptoms such as impulsivity, hyperactivity, inability to focus, as well as behavioral and emotional challenges. Additionally, a review evaluated studies assessing the impact of chiropractic care on learning difficulties and dyslexia. The review concluded a positive effect of chiropractic care as it improves cognitive modalities important in learning.

How does chiropractic help? Learning, attention, focus, emotion and behavior are all processes controlled by various brain centers. And because chiropractic care focuses on correcting the alignment of structures surrounding the nervous system, it also has an impact on the nervous system itself. Neural signals are the communication pathways between the central nervous system and the rest of the body. When the spine is misaligned, it has an impact on the nervous system and its functioning. This then leads to altered communication with the brain and can also impact the functioning of certain brain centers. By restoring the alignment and relieving pressure, chiropractors can enhance the function of the nervous system. When joints are misaligned, it can place stress on the spinal cord, brainstem and blood vessels supplying the brain of oxygen and nutrients. Because chiropractic care aims to restore the alignment of these structures, it effectively improves brain and brainstem functioning by enhancing circulation and relieving tension.

Chiropractic care can have a promising impact on individuals with disability difficulties and because of its holistic nature, it presents with very few side effects in comparison to the typical prescribed medications.

Making a Difference. Public health is for all of us. Join us as we work together to improve the health of people with disabilities.



Many thanks to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, Simply Wellness, Murphy Chiropractic & Wellness, Revolution Chiropractic, and the National Library of Medicine for supplying some of the documentation and images for the above information relating to Disabilities.