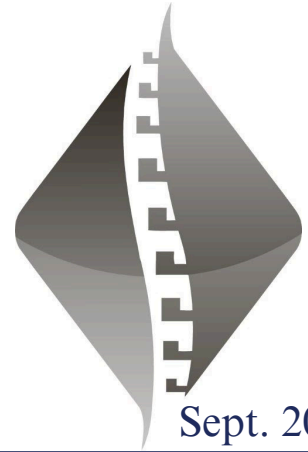


# VAN DAM CHIROPRACTIC

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## BACKPACK SAFETY FOR KIDS (AND ADULTS!)

Back-to-school season often means new supplies, fresh notebooks, and of course, backpacks. What many people don't realize is the strain that backpacks can place on the spine. Children are especially vulnerable, but adults who carry heavy bags can also encounter similar issues. Preventing posture problems starts with awareness and a few simple changes.

### Weight and Fit Matter

A backpack should never weigh more than 10–15% of the carrier's body weight. That means a 70-pound child shouldn't be hauling more than 7–10 pounds on their back. It's easy for weight to sneak up, textbooks, laptops, water bottles, sports gear, before you know it, the bag is too heavy. Over time, this can cause shoulders to slump forward, the head to jut out, and the lower back to arch unnaturally.

Fit makes a difference, too. Straps that are too loose allow the pack to hang low, forcing the wearer to lean forward. This posture strains the neck and shoulders and can lead to soreness that lingers. Straps should be snug, and the backpack should sit evenly in the middle of the back, not sagging near the hips.

### Smarter Packing and Carrying

Heavier items should be placed closest to the back panel of the backpack, with lighter items positioned toward the outside. This keeps the load balanced and reduces pulling forces on the spine. Using multiple compartments can help distribute weight more evenly. A waist or chest strap, when available, adds extra stability and reduces the burden on the shoulders.

Both straps should always be used—slinging a backpack over one shoulder may feel convenient, but it creates uneven stress on the spine and can contribute to long-term imbalance.

### Habits That Protect Spines

Encouraging kids (and adults) to unload unnecessary items from their backpacks each day keeps weight down. Locker stops, desk drops, or just a quick review of what isn't needed can lighten the load. Families can also make carrying heavier items less stressful by using

rolling backpacks or by sharing materials when possible.

Regular posture checks help too. If a child is walking with rounded shoulders or leaning forward, it's a sign that the backpack is too heavy or not being worn correctly. Some parents even make it a game, called a "backpack check," before heading out the door, to ensure the straps are secure and the weight is appropriate.

Backpacks are a part of everyday life, but they don't have to be a source of spinal stress. A few minor adjustments in weight, fit, and carrying habits can make a big difference for long-term comfort and posture health. According to the American Chiropractic Association, more than 5,000 backpack-related injuries are treated in U.S. emergency rooms each year, highlighting just how common these problems are (1).



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AMERICA'S WORKFORCE**

## CHIROPRACTIC ADJUSTMENTS VS MASSAGE: WHY THEY'RE NOT THE SAME

After a long week of working hunched over a desk, Jim scheduled a massage. The tension melted from his shoulders. But a week later, the pain returned. That's when his chiropractor explained that something he hadn't considered, what he felt in his muscles was only part of the picture.

### Muscles vs. Nervous System

Massage therapy focuses on muscles, circulation, and soft tissue. It's excellent for relaxation, easing tightness, and promoting better blood flow. Most people feel lighter and more limber after a good massage. But it doesn't correct spinal misalignments, nor does it address how the spine communicates with the nervous system.

A chiropractic adjustment aims deeper. It restores motion and position to the joints of the spine, especially where there's been a loss of function or pressure on nerves. When those misalignments are corrected, it affects how the brain and body talk to each other. That's not just about pain, it's about balance, coordination, digestion, sleep, and more.

One patient described it this way: "After a massage, I feel relaxed. After an adjustment, I feel like I'm plugged back in."

### Short-Term Relief vs. Long-Term Change

Massage therapy often brings temporary comfort. But if joints are stuck or the spine isn't moving properly, the muscles can't fully relax, no matter how often they're massaged. They'll tighten back up to protect the area. It's a loop: tension returns, the cycle repeats.

An adjustment breaks that loop. When the joint moves the way it's supposed to, the muscles can finally stop compensating. That's when real change happens. People often notice their posture improves, their body feels more "in sync," and they can go longer between visits.

Massage is excellent for soothing. Adjustments are better for correcting. That's why they work so well together, but they're not interchangeable.



According to a 2010 study published in The Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, spinal adjustments have measurable effects on nervous system function, particularly in how the brain processes movement and body (2).

### The Right Tool for the Job

It's not a matter of which is better. It's about what your body needs. If you're stiff from stress or sore from overuse, massage can be a welcome reset. But if your spine is misaligned and your nervous system isn't firing right, that's a job for the chiropractor.

The best results often come when both are used strategically—but it starts by understanding that they do very different things.

## SITTING IS THE NEW SMOKING OFFICE WORKERS BEWARE

### Office Workers Beware

Eight hours at a desk can seem harmless, but the human body was never designed for such prolonged periods of sitting. Remote work and long commutes have only added to the problem. Many office workers finish their day with stiff shoulders, a sore back, and the sense that their body is "locking up." The phrase "sitting is the new smoking" isn't just a catchy line. Extended sitting has been linked to a higher risk of chronic pain, circulation problems, and even long-term health concerns.



### Small Movements, Big Difference

Desk workers don't need to run a marathon to undo the effects of sitting. Tiny changes add up. Standing every half hour, rolling your shoulders, or taking a quick stretch break resets your posture and helps your muscles fire again. Micro-movements—such as shifting weight in the chair, wiggling toes, or performing light seated twists—keep circulation moving and prevent muscles from stiffening. Even a brief walk to refill a glass of water can help the body reset.

One patient who worked in accounting found that simply setting a reminder to stand and walk to the printer every hour alleviated his back pain in the afternoon.



Another patient noticed her headaches decreased once she added two minutes of stretching after video calls.

### Posture and Alignment

Posture is not about sitting rigid like a soldier. It's about positioning the body in a way that reduces strain. Adjusting monitor height, keeping feet flat on the floor, and avoiding slouching makes a huge difference. A supportive chair can help, but no chair can replace movement.

Over time, sitting with poor posture trains the spine and supporting muscles into unnatural patterns. That's where chiropractic adjustments come in. By restoring motion in the joints and easing pressure on irritated nerves, adjustments help the body recover from prolonged periods of sitting at a desk. Many patients notice that they breathe more easily, sit taller, and have increased energy after an adjustment.

### A Better Daily Routine

Office workers who incorporate regular movement, posture awareness, and chiropractic care often experience reduced stiffness, improved focus, and enhanced overall comfort. The body thrives when it is in motion, and the simple habit of breaking up sitting time can make workdays more productive and evenings more enjoyable.

Research published in the Annals of Internal Medicine shows that prolonged sitting is linked to a higher risk of illness and early death, regardless of exercise habits (3). This makes it even more important for office workers to stay active throughout the day and support their spinal health.

Desk jobs aren't going away, but the effects of sitting don't have to become permanent. With a few daily adjustments and regular chiropractic care, office workers can maintain comfort, activity, and overall health for years to come.

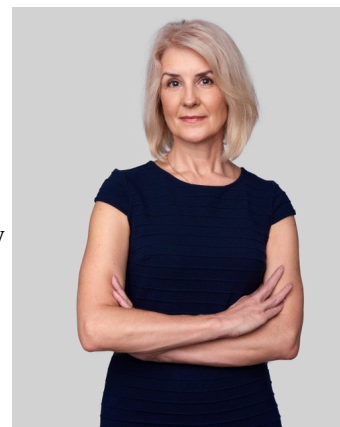
## RESEARCH AND CHIROPRACTIC

THERE SEEMS TO BE NO END TO THE CONDITIONS THAT RESPOND TO CHIROPRACTIC CARE – PHYSICAL AS WELL AS PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS. THAT IS BECAUSE CHIROPRACTIC DOES NOT “TREAT” A PARTICULAR CONDITION. CHIROPRACTIC CARE “TREATS” OR MORE ACCURATELY “CORRECTS” A SERIOUS INTERFERENCE TO BRAIN, NERVOUS SYSTEM AND ENERGY FUNCTION KNOWN AS THE SUBLUXATION. NO MATTER WHAT CONDITION YOU OR A LOVED ONE MAY HAVE, YOU WILL ALWAYS FUNCTION BETTER WHEN FREE FROM SUBLUXATIONS. CHIROPRACTORS ARE UNIQUELY TRAINED TO LOCATE AND CORRECT SUBLUXATIONS. ENJOY THIS MONTH'S CASES AND SEE MORE NEXT MONTH.



**Spinal Stenosis:** A 70-year-old woman with MRI-confirmed cervical spinal stenosis and spinal cord deformation developed neck pain, headaches, and burning sensations after a car accident.

She received chiropractic care using Applied Biostructural Therapy and Atlas Coccygeal Technique—nontraditional, gentle manipulations focused on reducing neural tension. Her symptoms resolved completely after a few sessions and remained absent at one-year follow-up, suggesting these chiropractic techniques may offer safe, long-term relief in select stenosis cases (4).



**A 15-year-old girl** with a 46° thoracic curve from adolescent idiopathic scoliosis underwent 18 months of chiropractic care, including spinal manipulation. Her Cobb angle reduced by 16°, along with improvements in posture, back pain, and bowel function. This case suggests chiropractic care may offer a non-surgical option for AIS (5).



*Van Dam Chiropractic would like to thank you for the many referrals of friends and family to our office.*

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### REFERENCES

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