



Discover Chiropractic

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Why Chiropractic Helps

Why is it that chiropractic works so well in removing common breastfeeding stumbling blocks? Nicole Piazza Lederman, an ICPA-certified chiropractor practicing in Waterloo, Ontario, and former associate professor at Parker University's College of Chiropractic, explains it this way:

Chiropractic helps for several reasons. First, in the newborn or preemie, the baby may have a weak suck reflex due to interference in the nervous system, especially at the level of the upper cervical spine. This can be caused by immaturity in the nervous system, in the case of the preemie, or by subluxation of the joints in the upper cervical spine due to birth trauma. Even in "good" hospital births, the head and neck are usually "managed" as the baby exits the birth canal and when the shoulders are delivered. This often results in some pulling and stretching of the tissues and joints in the neck. This type of birth trauma can cause a sprain/strain injury to the joints of the neck in addition to a subluxation complex.

Breastfeeding problems can also be caused by different cranial faults or slight misalignments in the cranial bones. This can again be due to the management of the head as the baby exits the birth canal. This can also be caused by the position of the baby in utero as well as prolonged or protracted labors, especially where vacuum or forceps have been used. In my experience, these babies will go to the breast and feed for a minute or two, but are fussy and come off the breast as they cannot get a good latch.

Most often I find that these babies have misalignment in the temporal mandibular joint, a fault at the frontal parietal articulation, as well as having an inferior palate on the same side as the TMJ subluxation. Once correcting this complex, you can test the sucking reflex by placing a finger in the baby's mouth; you'll find that the sucking reflex is better coordinated and much stronger. Moms are so relieved and grateful to be able to breastfeed their babies.



Photo Courtesy of Shelly Jones

Mothers and chiropractors are not the only ones who recognize the powerful and positive role that chiropractic can have on the nursing relationship. International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are also beginning to take note. Mellanie Sheppard, an IBCLC in the Fort Worth, Texas, area, says this, echoing many of Dr. Lederman's thoughts.

A long, difficult birth, a very fast birth, a vacuum- or forceps-assisted birth, or a cesarean birth may create tightness or tension in the neck, jaw or shoulders, which in turn can create some dysfunctional sucking patterns. A dysfunctional suck can cause breastfeeding to be inefficient for baby and can create pain for mom. Chiropractic care can relieve this tightness and tension and result in better breastfeeding with less pain.

When a lesson on how to latch just isn't enough to make breastfeeding work, chiropractic care just makes sense in correcting the deeper physiological causes of nursing difficulty. Helping the body function properly through a chiropractic adjustment does so much more than alleviate back pain.

-Sarah Clark, *Pathways Issue 46*

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