

TREATMENT

ultra-FIT takes a look at the **McTimoney chiropractor** method and specifically, what makes it different to other similar interventions



Whether you are training for fun or with a goal/event in mind, your body and how it functions is obviously vital to you to reach peak performance. You may focus on eating the right foods in the right ratios, make sure you are hydrated and have your training regime tailored specifically for your sport and you may train weaknesses that need to be addressed. However, do you dedicate time to making sure that your body is optimally aligned? After all, it can have a significant impact on what you achieve.

There are many different treatment modalities available for musculoskeletal problems, including acupuncture, chiropractic, physiotherapy, osteopathy, sports massage and rehab for prevention or cure. With there being a lot of cross-over between these and the conditions they treat, it can be really confusing to know

which is the best to turn to. Unless you have a direct recommendation how do you know which is the best for you?

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What is McTimoney Chiropractic?

The origins of the word chiropractic derive from the Greek word *kheir pracktikos*, which simply means 'done by hand'. Our hands are the tools of our trade.

McTimoney Chiropractors always assess and treat your whole body during every treatment. Your practitioner will check the bones of your head and face, entire spine, pelvis, arms and legs (feet and hands too). Although a thorough assessment is carried out at the first treatment, there are no assumptions about your alignment or what is going on at subsequent sessions. The practitioner will always treat what they find at that moment in time as improvements and changes occur in your body in the time between treatments.

We are all individuals and no two people with the same condition will react in exactly the same way. We all know the song, 'Dem Bones' -

where 'the foot bone is connected to the ankle bone, the ankle bone connected to the leg bone.', whilst not strictly anatomically correct it gives you the right idea. Any one area of your body is connected to another and as such injuries, misalignments and faulty mechanics can have far reaching effects.

The McTimoney Chiropractic adjustments are very fast and precise, which means they can feel gentle on your body whilst they are carried out. They use what are known as short lever techniques. This means your practitioner will adjust directly on the bone they want to have the impact on. In addition, the majority of adjustments are carried out whilst you are lying on your front or back. This means you can stay relaxed whilst the adjustments happen. As your bones are in a neutral/resting position there is no twisting, turning or big movements that are required in order to adjust a joint. As a result of this cracks or pops are rarely heard.

McTimoney Chiropractic & Sport & Fitness

McTimoney Chiropractors have been involved in the treatment of sports people and sports-related injuries from the very beginning of the profession. They see patients of all ages and abilities with a range of acute and chronic conditions. Your chiropractor is not just concerned with the treatment of sports-related injuries but in how to prevent them in the first place and how to help optimise performance, whether you are a professional sports person or someone who participates or works out for fun. New patients tend to visit a McTimoney Chiropractor for crisis care i.e. to resolve an injury, but they soon learn the benefits of a regular maintenance programme and pre-tournament care.



It is possible that a person can have a mechanical dysfunction without being aware of any clinical symptoms. If that is the case, then not only will they be prone to injury when applying that extra bit of effort, but as they are not functioning correctly, then they will not perform to their maximum capability. As a discipline that deals with functional disorders of the joints, the McTimoney Chiropractic method is suited to being included as part of the medical back-up team of any sport. What happens during a treatment session?

An initial consultation generally lasts 60-90 minutes. At this time a full medical history will be taken including in-depth information about your reason for attending. With your permission a thorough assessment is then carried out using relevant orthopaedic and neurological tests where necessary, to gain more clarity for an accurate diagnosis. All findings will be discussed with you. Although they do not carry out X-rays or other forms of imaging, if it is felt that this is a necessary step before treatment commences, your McTimoney Chiropractor will refer you on for further investigation.

Once these initial steps have been carried out your practitioner explains in more detail about McTimoney Chiropractic and how your condition is expressing itself in your body. You will also learn what to expect during a course of treatments and what the plan would be going forwards. If you are happy to go ahead, then the treatment will be carried out from your first appointment if appropriate to do so.

Generally, treatments are initially spaced at weekly intervals with follow up sessions lasting 30-45 minutes. A review is carried out at each treatment where your practitioner will identify the rate of your progress, both in terms of your alignment and your symptoms. This gives an accurate indication of the best time interval for your next appointment. They can give you some indication of how many sessions you may need at the outset but this is continually re-assessed during the whole treatment process. You may respond very quickly to treatment, or events/accidents may happen between sessions that hold back progress. The degree to which you follow any aftercare advice also makes a huge difference to your recovery rate. Generally

you should expect to see improvements within six sessions. If this is not the case and you are following all advice then it may be that referral onto another form of treatment or further investigation could be relevant for you. This would all be discussed well in advance during your course of treatment.

How often do I need to have a treatment?

How often a patient needs to visit their McTimoney Chiropractor is uniquely dependant on the individual, but things to consider are whether treatment is about pre-habilitation or rehabilitation. That is, are we looking at preventing or fixing the problem? Age, fitness level and competition level are also an important consideration in determining how often you should visit your chiropractor and whether your involvement is for fun or serious. The more elite sportspeople/serious trainers tend to have a session every month off-season and roughly every fortnight in season, but it really does depend on an individual's need.

What Types Of Conditions Can McTimoney Chiropractic Help?

There are many problems that can be helped including:

- Back pain
- Neck pain
- Recurrent injuries
- Headaches and migraines
- Arthritic pains
- Pain, discomfort and tension in joints

This list just gives you an overall impression. Essentially McTimoney Chiropractors are trained in assessing and treating all joints in the body. You don't necessarily have to have a current problem for treatment to be important within your training programme. If you have had recurrent weaknesses or problems in the past or just want to prevent problems from occurring in the first place McTimoney Chiropractic could help you.

Chiropractic Is Not Just About The Adjustments

There is so much more to Chiropractic than the treatment that happens in the room. How you live your life and the habits that you adopt, which could be contributing to your pain may also need to be addressed.

These would be discussed with you and tailored to your individual circumstances. As such a thorough medical history is taken so a clear picture of the things you routinely do that may not be helping you can be highlighted. This means that you can help to avoid putting any unnecessary strain on your body and thus help your own recovery.

Some areas to consider as an athlete/fitness trainer include:

How to do sit after you have finished your training session? Do you sit slumped in a chair or in the sauna/steam room? These can cause stretching of the supportive structures of your spine, which can result in movement between your vertebrae and leave it vulnerable to injury.

Are your muscles tight because they are weak or over worked? Maybe you just train one area of your body more than another for example targetting the muscles you can see rather than the ones you can't. Working the front of your body with weights whilst paying less attention to your back can lead to rounding of the back and shoulders.

Often when you are training you pay close attention to your form, however, this may not be the case outside of exercising. Do you do a long training session then go and sit slumped at a computer for hours on end? A common posture is sitting leaning forwards with your head and neck poking forwards. This can lead to over working of the muscles at the back of your neck and shoulders and pain and tension result.

If you have one area that keeps tightening up and doesn't release no matter how much stretching you do, or if it does you only get short-term relief, this could be due to a few reasons: one could be that this muscle area is weak and overworking or you have underlying misalignments that are putting more pressure on a particular region, never allowing the muscle to relax.

Case Study

Claire attends bootcamps three times a week in addition to doing yoga once a week and walks her dog. She first attended for treatment five months after an initial injury. Her first symptoms developed in her left glute after skiing, however, they eased after a few weeks then returned following a bootcamp session.

She had tried other treatments first - therapist who carried out myofascial release techniques then seven weeks of physiotherapy, however, she only found short-term relief. Use of a foam roller also eased her symptoms temporarily.

This time she pulled the muscles in her left buttock in addition to getting pain from the front of her pelvis (ilium at the area of the bony ridge called the asis), her groin area and the upper part of her left thigh. The pain in these areas was causing her to limp and was aggravated by any carrying or movements involving hip flexion. She had tried other treatments first - a therapist who carried out myofascial release techniques then seven



Medical outline:

Testing at the first appointment revealed reduced movement of her left sacroiliac joint. This reduced movement would put added burden on the muscles in the area. She also had reduced range particularly when flexing backwards and side bending to the right, more so than the left. Although other misalignments were found and adjusted, this tied in with the findings. When checking her alignment the most significant misalignments were around her pelvis, lumbar region and sacrum (located between the bones of the pelvis at the back). Massage was also done around her lower back and glutes. Adjusting her pelvis eased tension at the front of her thigh as this misalignment upwards was causing the tension. Claire was also shown gluteus medius strengthening exercises to improve strength around the pelvis and help prevent any recurrence.

In total Claire has had six treatments over four months and has commented that she feels like the problem has completely gone. In addition to this she has run further than she has ever been able to before and also taken up Pilates to help maintain and improve her strength.

How To Find The Right Practitioner For You

At the end of the day there is nothing better than a direct recommendation. Maybe there is already someone at your gym or club who

has had successful treatment. It may be worth asking around to find someone close by.

Although not essential for successful treatment, a practitioner who has a good knowledge of your sporting area can also be advantageous, particularly at higher levels. There may be a McTimoney Chiropractor who does the same sport/fitness activity as you locally, so ask around where you are or at relevant local clubs.

You can also search directly on the McTimoney Chiropractic Association (MCA) website: www.mctimoneychiropractic.org.

Chiropractic is a strictly regulated profession so only practitioners who have completed their training at a college recognised and approved by the General Chiropractic Council (who regulate the entire profession) are entitled to call themselves a Chiropractor. By searching on the MCA website directly you will be assured that anyone listed will be fully regulated and insured.

About the Author:

Rachael Wall is a McTimoney Chiropractor, who has been in practice since 2001 and Fellow of the Royal College of Chiropractors. She co-runs the Lotus Centre (www.Lotus-Centre.co.uk) in Bourne End, Buckinghamshire - this clinic also holds the prestigious Patient Partnership Quality Mark (PPQM) for the standard of care it delivers to patients. In addition further back care information for all aspects of your life can be found at: www.advice.sittingwell.co.uk