



How Do Massage and Chiropractic Treatments Affect Sleep?

<https://www.sleepassociation.org/blog-post/how-do-massage-and-chiropractic-treatments-affect-sleep/>

If you're experiencing poor sleep or insomnia, you might want to consider massage or chiropractic treatment. Approximately two-thirds of adults have at least one instance of **insomnia** each year, and 15% of adults experience chronic insomnia. Many others deal with spinal pain, headaches and migraines that prevent them from getting proper rest. Keep reading to learn how regular massage and chiropractic treatments can affect sleep.

What Do Chiropractors and Massage Therapists Do?

Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is a manual treatment option that comes in many forms, including Swedish massage, sports massage, pregnancy and relaxation massage. Depending on the type of massage and other factors, massage therapists may or may not be required to obtain a license. Massage therapy is **known** to affect blood flow in the lymphatic system and connective tissues and muscles, which triggers the body to release neurochemical reactions with a variety of benefits. In addition to improved sleep, massage can promote relaxation, improved blood pressure and decreased heart rate.

Chiropractic Care

Chiropractors are professionals who treat patients while paying special attention to the spine and its alignment. Many people associate chiropractic treatments with neck and back adjustments, but care extends beyond that. Chiropractors may also perform manual and soft tissue therapy, rehabilitative exercise, patient education and other treatments relating to overall wellness. Their functional and biomechanical approach to neuromusculoskeletal conditions offers an alternative approach to health care.

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Spinal Pain

Many people report acute muscle pain, old injuries and chronic pain related to spinal health. Pain can cause sleep disturbances and deficiencies, but sleep deficiency can also increase [symptoms of pain](#). Sleep deficiency also causes a reduction in pain tolerance. [Studies](#) have shown a strong link between musculoskeletal pain and overall impaired health, as well as pain and sleep disorders.

Chiropractic treatment has been shown to be effective in treating different kinds of pain. In [one study](#), subjects with fibromyalgia, a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain, received chiropractic treatment. The study results indicated that 64% of subjects had improved pain and sleep quality following chiropractic treatment.

Massage therapy can help relieve pain and improve circulation, mobility, tension and recovery. Therapists may perform assisted stretching, which can also help relieve pain. [Studies](#) show that subjects who received massage therapy reported less pain and improved sleep with superior results over other relaxation techniques. Breast cancer patients, for example, report decreased pain and fatigue and improved quality of sleep when given massage treatments one to two times per week for no longer than 30 minutes.

Headaches and Migraines

Headaches are a common problem and come in the form of either muscular tension headaches or vascular headaches. Headaches often stem from cervical spine tension, causing pain and inflammation in the shoulder and neck muscles and consequently a tight feeling around the head. In some cases, you may also experience a pounding or throbbing sensation. In the United States, at least 60% of people who have chronic headaches also experience migraines. There is a positive correlation between migraines and sleep disorders. Alleviation of headache and migraine symptoms is likewise shown to improve sleep quality.

Although studies are somewhat limited, they suggest that chiropractic treatment may be effective in reducing or eliminating migraines. In one case, 10 patients with chronic headaches received chiropractic treatment. The results showed that the frequency and duration of headaches greatly reduced following 12 treatments over an eight-week period, although the intensity of pain was unaffected. Most studies suggest that further research is required to demonstrate the effects of chiropractic care.

Massage clients, however, show a significant decrease in migraines following treatments. Massage therapy can significantly decrease pain intensity and duration, as well as depressive symptoms. This alleviation of migraine and headache symptoms can improve the sleep quality of those affected. Massage is recommended as a non-pharmacologic treatment for people who experience migraines and poor sleep quality.

Insomnia

As with spinal pain and migraines, many people experience secondary insomnia. Secondary insomnia is characterized by poor sleep that is brought on by another condition. When no other condition is present, it's referred to as primary insomnia. Insomnia can cause reduced quality of life, work productivity and mental health. As such, it's positively correlated with depression, anxiety, cognitive impairment and increased pain. Insomnia may be helped by chiropractic and massage treatments.

Chiropractic care is thought to have a neurological effect that promotes the relaxation of the mind and the occurrence of non-REM sleep.

Many people who receive chiropractic care self-report an immediate improvement in their sleep patterns. In another case, an individual had a neck injury that prompted sleep disorders, bipolar disorder and rapid manic episodes and seizures.

They received regular chiropractic treatment, and the neurological conditions were eliminated after seven months of treatment.

Massage therapy may also help reduce insomnia. Insomnia can sometimes be caused by emotional or physical distress. Massage is shown to create a relaxation response from the nervous system. This may decrease blood pressure, stress hormones, depression and anxiety, improving sleep quality. The improvement in emotional wellness and sleep quality can also help reduce pain and inflammation symptoms and promote better recovery.

Infant Sleep

Some massage therapists [specialize](#) in infant massage. There are also chiropractic treatments for infants. Some [studies](#) suggest that treatments may reduce colic and crying and promote relaxation, [helping infants sleep better](#).

How Often Should You Seek Treatment?

If you've decided that chiropractic care is right for you, you'll likely need more than one session. Your chiropractor can create an individualized treatment plan for you. They may initially suggest more frequent visits of two to three times per week and then reduce the frequency as your condition improves.

Massage therapy requires a similar frequency. People who get headaches are [shown](#) to benefit from two massage visits per week. As with chiropractic care, your massage therapist can determine an individualized treatment plan.