

# Spinal Manipulation

Supporting health by maintaining optimal nervous system function and movement of the spine

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Veterinary Spinal Manipulative Therapy is an area of animal health care that focuses on the health of the nervous system and spine, and their effect on whole body health and disease.

There are many organ systems within the body, and the nervous system coordinates and regulates them all. The nervous system includes the brain, the spinal cord, and the nerves. The spinal cord is housed and protected by a system of bones (vertebrae) that comprise the spine. These bones are connected by a series of muscles and ligaments. The relative flexibility of these connections allows movement and flexibility of the spine.

When the vertebrae are restricted in their movement this is called hypomobility.

Hypomobility can cause pain, stiffness, muscle spasm, inflammation of the local tissues, and nerve inflammation and/or compression. Hypomobility of one part of the spine also forces the segments above and below that area to compensate and become too mobile, which can cause further injury.

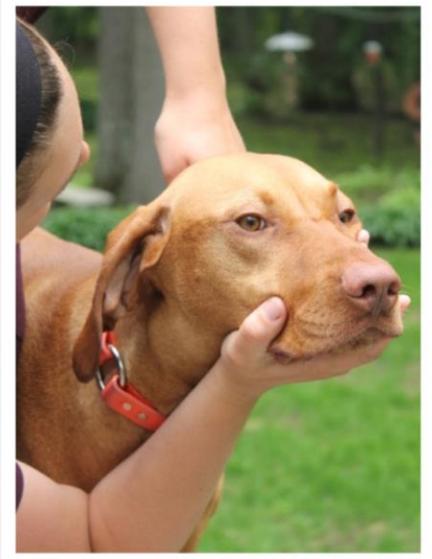
All of these changes affect the function of the nervous system and alter its communication with the other organ systems of the body, including the immune system. This is why spinal manipulation not only affects the spine, but the health of the whole body, including the internal organs.

Practitioners certified in spinal manipulation address areas of hypomobility by using their hands to apply a very gentle, very precise, controlled force to restore motion to the vertebrae. This technique is called an adjustment. This adjustment only occurs within the normal range of motion of the joint.

Research has shown that spinal adjustments fire

receptors found in the muscles around the spine called mechanoreceptors. This has been shown to stimulate the release of endorphins, increase circulation, decrease inflammation, and reduce pain sensation.

Once movement is restored to the vertebrae, the nervous system is allowed to function normally again, which can improve immune system function, and organ health.



Veterinary Spinal Manipulative Therapy is the veterinary equivalent of human chiropractic therapy.



Veterinary spinal manipulative therapy (or animal chiropractic as it's often called) has been around for as long as 100 years, but was not formalized until 1989 by Sharon Willoughby who was both a doctor of veterinary medicine and a doctor of chiropractic.



The popping or cracking sound, known as cavitation, which is often heard with human chiropractic adjustments is rarely heard during the adjustment of animals due to differences in their joint physiology.

## Spinal manipulative therapy can be useful in the treatment of:

- Neck, back, and tail pain
- Gait abnormalities/lameness
- Hip dysplasia
- Injuries from falls or accidents
- Prevention of intervertebral disc disease
- Arthritis
- Weakness
- Incontinence
- Neuropathies

## Frequently Asked Questions:

*Q: Is spinal manipulation safe?*

A: Spinal manipulation is very safe, and side effects are very uncommon, when treatments are performed by a certified veterinarian. Spinal adjustments are applied within the joints normal range of motion, and no farther, so as to prevent injury. The most common side effect is mild soreness or tiredness for 24 hours after the treatment. On rare occasions, patients will become slightly worse for 24 hours before becoming better.

*Q: Is spinal manipulation painful?*

A: Because of the gentle and precise nature of the adjustment, there should be minimal discomfort during the treatment. Most patients feel immediate relief.

*Q: How long does a treatment take?*

A: It depends on the animal. Some pets are very comfortable with being adjusted and so the session can be as short as 15 minutes. Others need more time to become acclimated to being adjusted, and so the session may take longer to make them as comfortable with the process as possible.

*Q: How many adjustments will my pet have per treatment?*

A: The number of adjustments made depends on the number of areas of the spine that are found to be restricted as well as the age of the patient. Older patients may be overwhelmed with a large number of adjustments, so treatments may be shorter and less frequent than for a younger dog.

*Q: How frequently will my pet need to be adjusted?*

A: Adjustments may be as frequent as every 2 weeks at the beginning of treatment. As your pets' condition improves, treatments may be spread out to as infrequently as every 4-6 months.

*Q: When will I start to see results?*

A: Improvement will be seen in most patients within 24 hours. Some patients require 3-4 treatments before improvement is seen.