

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Wayne Terai

Chiropractic for Breastfeeding Problems

Most new moms are aware that breast milk is best for their babies. They know that it aids in development and protects against disease. But many moms don't anticipate problems with breastfeeding. Assuming that breastfeeding is a natural, instinctive process, many women think that the baby will simply take to it naturally. When that doesn't happen, mothers may become frustrated and give up breastfeeding altogether.

*What these women don't realize is that breastfeeding dilemmas often stem from joint misalignments in the baby. The good news is that Dr. Terai can help resolve these imbalances — and prevent them from occurring in the first place. In fact, a just-published study of 114 infants with trouble breastfeeding found that chiropractic care is highly effective at alleviating breastfeeding difficulties. All of the infants in the study showed improvement, with a whopping 78 percent experiencing complete resolution of their breastfeeding problems within two weeks (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2009;32:670-4).*



the predicament often starts with the baby.

Many newborns have challenges latching or suckling effectively. These difficulties may stem from labor and delivery trauma, which result in misalignments in the spine of the child's neck, or of the jaw (temporomandibular joint or TMJ).

Labor and delivery may cause **vertebral subluxations** — areas in the spine where vertebrae are slightly out of place. A traumatic birth or a Cesarean section may put the baby at a heightened risk of this condition. Vertebral subluxations in the spine of the neck (cervical spine) are linked with breastfeeding problems (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2009;32:670-4).

In addition, vertebral subluxations may trigger a chain of events that leads to a misaligned jaw — which may also initiate breastfeeding problems.

Chiropractors, like Dr. Terai, employ gentle maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments** to correct vertebral subluxations and TMJ misalignment, which, in turn, may resolve breastfeeding issues.



Benefits of Breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics calls breastfeeding “uniquely superior” to all other forms of infant nutrition and recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for about the first six months of life.

Dr. Terai reminds patients that the benefits of breastfeeding for both baby and mother are numerous. For instance, breast milk reduces the inci-

dence and severity of a wide range of diseases and reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

And, a recent analysis that followed 13,889 newborns revealed that breastfeeding is associated with significantly higher IQ scores by first grade (*Arch Gen Psychiatry* 2008;65:578-84).

Breastfeeding also helps mothers by decreasing bleeding after birth, speeding return to pre-birth weight, decreasing the risk of later developing breast or ovarian cancer, and reducing the effects of osteoporosis.

Breastfeeding Problems & Joint Misalignment

Despite the vital importance of breastfeeding, many mothers find it difficult or impossible to nurse their infants. Although it is common to assume that nursing troubles arise from poor milk production or other maternal issues,

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One recent study published in the *Journal of Human Lactation* found that “lower jaw asymmetry is an early identifiable sign of torticollis, and a possible contributor to latch difficulties, nipple pain, and poor milk transfer. Pediatricians and lactation consultants should look for signs of lower jaw asymmetry combined with a preference for turning the head to one side in newborns who present with breastfeeding difficulties. By recognizing these anatomic irregularities early in the course of breastfeeding, pediatric health care providers will be able to treat breastfeeding problems promptly and proactively.” (*J Hum Lact* 2006; 22:328-34.)

New Research

A new study found that chiropractic care for infants resolves breastfeeding challenges. The analysis looked at 114 infants who were hospital-diagnosed or lactation consultant-diagnosed with feeding problems.

The researchers found that many of the babies had vertebral subluxations in the spine of their neck, temporomandibular joint imbalance, and inadequate suck reflex.



All the infants received chiropractic care. All children showed some improvement, with 78 percent (89 infants) being able to exclusively breast

feed after two to five treatments within a two-week time period.



The study's authors concluded that “Cooperative multidisciplinary care to support breastfeeding was demonstrated in this population. Chiropractic treatment may be a useful adjunct to routine care given by other professionals in cases of diagnosed breastfeeding problems with a biomechanical component.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2009;32:670-4.)

Past Studies

Previous research also demonstrates that chiropractic care may put an end to breastfeeding difficulties. For instance, a study published in 2004 concluded that: “Biomechanical dysfunction based on articular or muscular integrity may influence the ability of an infant to suckle successfully and ... intervention via soft tissue work, cranial therapy, and spinal adjustments may have a direct result in improving the infant's ability to suckle efficiently.” (*J Clinical Chiro Ped* 2004;6:349-61.)

And, a 1999 study looked at two infants with problems breastfeeding. The first infant was an eight-week-old girl who was unable to maintain suction while breastfeeding since birth. The mother said the child “broke suction with every suck,” and had problems with excessive regurgitation and fussiness. After two weeks of chiropractic care, the regurgitation and fussiness ceased, and the child was sleeping better. A follow-up at 9½ months revealed no return of symptoms.

The second infant was a four-week-old boy who had been unable to suckle effectively since birth. He was diagnosed with spinal and cranial subluxations. He suckled immediately follow-

ing his first adjustment (*J Clinical Chiro Ped* 1999;4).

Finally, a paper presented at the National Conference on Chiropractic and Pediatrics in 1993 looked at 1,000 newborns treated by chiropractors for failure and/or difficulty with breastfeeding. In 800 or 80 percent, birth-induced temporomandibular joint dysfunction was found to be the cause.

In all cases, the babies received chiropractic adjustments, with excellent results in 99 percent of the cases. (“Birth induced TMJ dysfunction: the most common cause of breastfeeding,” Arcadi, VC, *Proceedings of the National Conference on Chiropractic and Pediatrics*. Oct., 1993 Palm Springs, CA. Pub. International Chiropractors Assoc., Arlington, VA.)

Don't Wait Until Your Baby Arrives

If you have a new baby, or are expecting one soon, make scheduling a visit to our office top priority. Chiropractic care during pregnancy can help make delivery easier, by ensuring that the mother's hip joints are in alignment. Once your baby arrives, chiropractic care can help your baby breastfeed successfully.



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