

## Position statement

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June 2024

### Interim policy on spinal manipulation for infants and young children

#### Overview

The Chiropractic Board of Australia (the Board) has reinstated the *Interim Policy – Spinal manipulation for infants and young children* at the request of Health Ministers pending further review between the Board and Health Ministers.

The Board advises chiropractors to not use spinal manipulation to treat children under two years of age.

For the purpose of this interim policy, 'spinal manipulation' means moving the joints of the spine beyond the child's usual physiological range of motion using a high velocity, low amplitude thrust.

#### Background

The role of the Board is to protect the public as mandated by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The Board regulates the chiropractic profession by setting registration standards, codes, guidelines and policies and ensuring that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practice in a safe, competent and ethical manner are registered.

#### Chiropractic paediatric care

In November 2023, the Board published a revised position statement on chiropractic paediatric care. In this statement, the Board stipulated an expectation that chiropractors ensure their clinical practice is consistent with current evidence and/or best-practice approaches. However, the Board acknowledges there is no current clinical guideline, or peer-reviewed publication to guide chiropractors with respect to the care of infants and young children, and the use of spinal manipulation in particular.

#### Interim policy: spinal manipulation for infants and young children

The *Interim Policy – Spinal manipulation for infants and young children* is an interim policy.

The Board expects chiropractors to comply with the interim policy, in addition to following the guidance provided in the [Statement on paediatric care](#) (2023) and the shared [Code of conduct](#) (2022).

#### The Board expects chiropractors to:

- understand that children have significant anatomical, physiological, developmental and psychological differences and needs from adults and that their healthcare management requires specific skills and expertise
- modify all care and treatment (including technique and force) to suit the age, presentation and development of the patient
- discuss their proposed management plan with the patient and their parent/guardian
- inform the patient and their parent/guardian about the quality of the acceptable evidence and explain the basis for the proposed treatment

- provide the patient and their parent/guardian with information about the risks and benefits of the proposed treatment and the risks of receiving no treatment
- appropriately document consent, including considering the need for written consent for high-risk procedures
- refer patients when they have conditions or symptoms outside a chiropractor's area of competence, for example 'red flags' such as the presence of possible serious pathology that requires urgent medical referral to the care of other registered health practitioners, and
- communicate effectively with other health practitioners involved with the care of the patient, such as the patient's general practitioner or paediatrician.

When chiropractors do not have the clinical skills and knowledge to appropriately assess and/or manage a paediatric patient, the Board expects them to refer the patient to another healthcare practitioner who has the appropriate skills, or to co-manage the patient with them. In all cases, the patients' best interests must be the priority.

### **Review**

This interim policy will be in place pending further consultation with Health Ministers. The Board will consider its obligations under the National Law and any further decisions by Health Ministers in developing a final position.

### **For more information**

- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers).
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200.