The Chiropractor Starter Guide

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
FOR THOSE CONSIDERING CHIROPRACTIC
You'll have a lot of questions as you start exploring a chiropractic career. You might be trying to figure out if the chiropractic field is the best choice for you. Whether you’re trying to decide if chiropractic school is for you or choosing the perfect school, this starter guide will serve as an excellent resource. Palmer College is widely regarded as the world leader in chiropractic education, so we'd like to help answer your questions about this career and our distinguished program.

The starter guide is broken into three sections

› Should I become a chiropractor?
› I’m ready. How do I pick a school?
› Palmer College is on my list. Tell me what I need to know.

This guide is intended to be used as a quick reference. Take a look at the sections of most interest to you. Please share your feedback regarding content that should be added to this guide. We release regular updates to ensure the best information is available. You can reach us with feedback at one of our three campuses, admissions.ia@palmer.edu, admissions.ca@palmer.edu, admissions.fl@palmer.edu.
Section 1: Should I become a chiropractor?

You might still be deciding if a chiropractic career is right for you. This is an incredibly important decision, as you'll spend several years and thousands of dollars to become a chiropractor. Chiropractic can be an incredibly rewarding profession that allows you to help people on a daily basis while making a great living, working in a healthy environment. There are several fundamental questions to consider when determining if chiropractic is the right profession for you, including:

- What is chiropractic care?
- What career paths are available in the field?
- Will I find it rewarding?
- What salary can I expect?
- What is the future of the chiropractic profession?
- What does a chiropractor’s average day look like?
**What is chiropractic care?**

Chiropractic care restores and preserves health by improving the body’s structure, primarily the spine, and function, primarily coordinated by the nervous system. At Palmer, we view chiropractors as the primary care professionals for spinal health and well-being.

**What career paths are available in the field?**

Career paths you can choose from in the chiropractic field include:

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**Will I find it rewarding?**

The fact you’re reading this guide most likely means you want to help other people by improving their health and wellness. That’s what chiropractors do. Whether you’re researching, educating or practicing, improving the quality of life and performance of others will be your focus. If you want to actively help others live healthy lives, then you’ll certainly find chiropractic a rewarding profession.

**What salary can I expect?**

The many career paths in the chiropractic field have different levels of compensation. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook 2014, employment in the chiropractic profession in 2012 had a median pay of $66,160 per year or $31.81 per hour. You may make more or less depending on a wide range of variables.
What's the future of the chiropractic profession?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook 2014, employment in the chiropractic profession continues to be promising. Chiropractic employment is expected to increase 15 percent between 2012 and 2022 based on consumer demand for alternative care.

What does a chiropractor’s average day look like?

With so many different career paths in chiropractic, it’s hard to depict an average day. One thing most chiropractors do every day is work one-on-one with patients. Working with patients will encompass:

- Working with patients to assess their overall condition. This will involve personal interviews, physical examinations and medical history reviews.

- You’ll assess the person’s reflexes, spinal condition and posture. This also may include taking X-rays.

- After assessing a patient’s condition, you’ll develop and execute a treatment plan to restore health and wellness. Adjusting a patient's spinal column and other joints with the appropriate techniques is a typical first step.

- Depending on your assessment, you may also provide additional treatments such as applying heat or cold to a patient's injured areas.

- You may also advise patients on exercise routines, nutrition and sleep habits to enhance their overall health and alleviate their condition.

- You might also refer patients to other health care professionals in some cases.

As a solo practitioner, you could also expect days that encompass marketing, billing, administrative tasks and management activities. As an employee or partner, you may have other duties that don’t involve patients.
Section 2: How do I pick a school?

The perfect chiropractic school for you depends on many factors. The importance of each factor will be unique to your situation. While one student will place great importance on a school’s reputation, another student may place great emphasis on the methods taught. Ultimately, the choice is yours, but it’s critical to consider each of the following factors.

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Review each section that follows for a list of questions you should ask about each of these areas as well as reasons why these topics might be important considerations for you.

Reputation

You’ll spend your entire career with a degree from the school you choose. You’ll have a vested interest in the long-term success of that school. If the school’s reputation and history continues to flourish, your degree will reflect that reputation. If the school closes a few years after you graduate, the perceived value of your degree may be greatly damaged.
Questions about a school’s reputation to consider

- How long has the school been operating? The school’s longevity boosts your confidence it’ll be around for decades to come.

- Is the school financially sound? Questions about the school’s long-term financial success are fair and important.

- What's the quality of the facilities? High-quality environments are more likely to attract high-quality professors and students, thus enhancing the school’s reputation.

- Does the school have a recognized research department? This’ll tell you if the school is seen as an industry leader. It’ll also ensure you receive a cutting-edge chiropractic education.

Financial Aid

Cost is a significant consideration when you want any type of post-secondary education. Many schools will help you apply for federal financial aid and other financial programs.

If federal aid is important to you, ask:

- Is the school accredited? If a school isn’t accredited you won’t be able to obtain traditional financial aid.

- Does the school offer guidance for grant applications and scholarships? You may qualify for Federal Pell Grants, the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) or scholarships. The depth of the representative’s answer will tell you a great deal about the assistance you can expect.

- How effective is the Financial Aid Department at helping students? Ask questions regarding the percentage of applicants that receive funding.

Student Success

Your chiropractic college is a learning ground that launches your dream career. Fulfilling your dream requires that your school provides you with the training you need to pass the national boards and other required exams.
Find out how successfully a particular school will prepare you by asking these questions:

- What percentage of your students pass the national boards compared to other colleges?

- What's the professor-to-student ratio and average class size? The ability to get the one-on-one attention you might need and get the most out of your education is critical. Smaller class sizes will provide you with greater direct access to your teachers.

- Are business classes available? If you plan on opening your own practice, this will be crucial. It's less important if you'll be an associate. Your goals for your chiropractic career will dictate the importance of business courses.

- What's the length of your program? While getting through school quickly might seem nice, the more time you spend learning your new profession, the better prepared you’ll be for your exams and your career.

Location

The location of the school is probably important to you. Consider the location where you’ll be most successful. If you aren’t used to the bustle of a large city, then that might not be the best place to go to school. If you’ve always lived in cities, then a sleepy college town might not be the best fit for you. Look into chiropractic colleges like Palmer College that have a number of locations in different types of environments. This way you can get to know the school and have a number of campus options. Also, make sure you feel comfortable on the campus. You’ll spend years on this campus so make sure the environment is conducive to your learning style.

Faculty

The quality of your education will depend greatly on the quality of the faculty teaching you. The level of experience and the reputation of the teaching staff is important. You want to learn from the best.

Questions to ask about a school’s faculty:

- How many of the professors have real clinical experience and how many years of clinical experience do they have?
Section 2: How do I pick a school?

- How many professors are actively publishing in journals and researching?

- How many professors have had successful practices prior to teaching? If you’re interested in opening your own practice at some point, this is important. Not all of your professors will have had their own practices, but you should have access to those who have. You’ll stand a better chance of success if you can model others’ successes.

Methodology

There are many different methodologies in the chiropractic field, referred to as “techniques.” You may not be familiar with them. If you aren’t, they’re worth researching. Start by visiting chiropractors in your area and asking them what techniques they use and experience these methods firsthand. Familiarity with the techniques helps you find the school that teaches you the ones you prefer. Understanding the difference between corrective and relief care and other methodologies can take some time, but it’ll pay long-term dividends.

Ask school representatives what techniques they include in their core teachings. Every school will proclaim its methods are the best. Aligning your preferred methodology with your school of choice is key. It’s also important to have a wide variety of technique courses available, so ask what techniques are taught in the core curriculum and which ones are taught as electives.

Questions to ask about a school’s methodology:

- How much focus is there on related fields such as anatomy, physiology, physics, pathophysiology, kinesiology and chemistry? Understanding how the curriculum incorporates these topics provides you with a better sense of the school’s preferred methodologies.

- Does the school also teach methods such as electrical stimulation, soft tissue and muscle work, nutrition, and exercise and stretching techniques, or is the primary focus spinal manipulation?

- Is patient interaction in the curriculum? Ultimately, chiropractic work is about helping people. Many of the chiropractic career paths will require patient interaction on a daily basis.
Philosophy and Culture

Many people pursue a career in chiropractic because they love people and they want to make a difference in the lives of others. Make sure you look for a school that’s in line with your personal philosophy. This could include student culture (interaction, teamwork, etc.), campus life and humanitarian work.

Questions to determine a school’s philosophy:

- How large is the student body each year? You might have a very different experience with a large class versus a small class. You most likely have your own preferences, so you should know how many fellow students will join you throughout your schooling.

- What’s the student-body culture like? Do students interact much outside of the classroom? Having other students to go through the education process with can be one of the most rewarding aspects of your experience. This is particularly true if you’re moving to attend school.

- Does the school have clubs and organizations such as student government, student newspapers and a large number of athletic teams?

- Does the school offer any humanitarian efforts and ways to give back to the community, or world, while honing your skills?

- What is the intangible feel of the school and campus? Do you feel like you belong? That intangible feel shouldn’t be underestimated.

School Interactions

As you start reaching out to schools, assume representatives will put their best foot forward. They should be excited you’re expressing an interest in joining them at their school. The school is keenly interested in talented and ambitious students who create high-quality classes. You should enjoy your interactions with people as you attend events, talk with admissions officers and participate in campus visits. If your experience with the school isn’t positive while you’re being recruited, then it might not be positive once you become a student.
Cost vs. Value

It’s no secret that school can be expensive. However, cost shouldn’t be the only consideration. Value should be a huge focus. If a school will better prepare you for a successful career then it has far more value than a school that doesn’t, but costs less. Weighing costs with value is an important consideration.

Questions to help measure a school’s cost vs. value:

- How long is the program? A longer program could be more expensive, yet more in-depth. While you could finish your schooling more quickly, you could leave yourself in a position of lacking education because you wanted to save time or money. This could cost you more in the long run.

- What is the tuition cost per term? What are the fees and materials going to cost you on average each term? It’s important to calculate all of the costs, not just the tuition itself.

- What'll your housing situation be? If you're staying in a campus dormitory, what are the costs for room and board?

- Will you learn practice-management skills? Will you learn how to find a job in the field? If you plan to start a practice or be an associate, you’ll need skills to help you launch your chiropractic career. A school that prepares you well provides tremendous value, even if there’s a higher cost.
Why should I consider Palmer College?

The short answer? Because Palmer is the trusted leader in chiropractic education. Chiropractic was founded right down the street from Palmer College of Chiropractic’s Davenport, Iowa, campus. Also, Palmer is the oldest and largest chiropractic college in the world. Our faculty and programs are the best in the world. Plus, Palmer is home to the world’s leading chiropractic research program. The question really is, why wouldn’t you choose Palmer?

How long is the Doctor of Chiropractic program?

Students attend classes on a year-round schedule (including breaks) and complete their studies in three and one-third years. On Palmer’s campus in Davenport, Iowa, the program is 10 trimesters long. The programs at Palmer’s San Jose, Calif., and Port Orange, Fla., campuses are 13 quarters in length.
How much is tuition?

Tuition costs average $33,000 per year.

Is there a fee to apply?

Yes, there’s a $100 non-refundable application fee.

When do classes start?

Our Davenport, Iowa, campus enrolls students in March, July and November. Our San Jose, Calif., and Port Orange, Fla., campuses enroll students in January, April, July and October.

Where can I meet with an admissions representative?

Palmer admissions representatives meet with students at each of the Palmer campuses and at off-site events throughout the year. View our complete Representative Travel Calendar for details—and find out when Palmer is coming to your area.

Do I need an undergraduate degree? And, if I do, what should I major in?

Although it isn’t an official educational requirement for admission, we recommend students complete a bachelor’s program prior to entering the Doctor of Chiropractic program because some state licensing boards require a bachelor’s degree in order to practice. Applicants with a bachelor’s degree are awarded priority seating at our Port Orange, Fla., campus, as a bachelor’s degree is required to graduate from the Doctor of Chiropractic program there.

A specific major isn’t required. A majority of our students choose pre-health, biology, chemistry or pre-med as their majors, but Palmer students have varied backgrounds in business, English and even history.
Where should I go to prepare for Palmer? Can I take undergraduate courses at Palmer?

You can attend any number of colleges in preparation to attend Palmer College. We encourage you to contact an admissions representative to discuss your plans. Based upon your individual situation, your representative will work with you one-on-one and provide the best information. Contact information is located at the end of this section.

In addition, Palmer has joint admissions programs and articulation agreements with a number of schools. Talk to an admissions representative for more details.

On Palmer’s Davenport, Iowa, campus, the Department of Undergraduate Studies offers a Bachelor of Science in General Science to aid doctor of chiropractic applicants preparing for the Doctor of Chiropractic Program. Some states also require the completion of a bachelor’s of science degree before a Doctor of Chiropractic can be licensed. All classes are upper-level, three credit hours each, follow Palmer’s trimester schedule and start in mid-afternoon to mesh with D.C. class schedules.

Palmer has three campuses— which one is right for me?

No matter where you go, Palmer equals excellence. Each Palmer campus features the three phases of our curriculum: basic sciences (anatomy, embryology, pathology, physiology, etc.); clinical sciences (radiology, technique, diagnosis); and outpatient clinics, business-management and professional-development curriculum.

All three Palmer campuses offer immediate hands-on activities within the curriculum, such as taking a patient history, observing in the clinic setting, studying anatomy through cadaver dissection and learning palpation techniques.

The curriculum delivery at both Palmer’s Davenport, Iowa, and San Jose, Calif., campuses is through lecture and lab-based courses. Both campuses have sectioned labs for a more hands-on approach and increased contact with the instructor. Palmer’s Port Orange, Fla., campus has curriculum mastery courses set up in “tracks,” which focus on specific areas of instruction and are linked by common subject matter.

The Davenport, Iowa, campus is known as The Fountainhead, because it’s the founding location of the profession. It’s comprised of 14 major buildings that occupy seven city-blocks and is the largest of the three Palmer campuses. These buildings contain classrooms, a fitness center, the Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research (the largest in the world), the David D. Palmer Health Sciences Library, the Student Union, the Palmer Center for Business Development and the Academic Health Center. There’s a close-knit feel on this campus, which tends to attract students with families, as well as those drawn to the profession by chiropractic philosophy.
Palmer’s San Jose, Calif., campus occupies one building on the western side of multi-cultural San Jose. It’s been retrofitted specifically for convenient access to all classrooms, state-of-the-art laboratories, library, fitness center and the outpatient clinic. The campus is located in the heart of Silicon Valley and is known for its excellent Sports Council student organization. It also has a great focus on chiropractic research.

Palmer’s Port Orange, Fla., campus is located in the heart of Port Orange. The campus consists of three buildings designed to specifically serve chiropractic students with the most up-to-date technology available. The Port Orange campus offers an integrated learning system. Many students who attend this campus are drawn to sports chiropractic, nutrition and pediatrics.

While each Palmer campus has its own personality due in part to its location, you’re going to get a top-notch chiropractic education at all three.

Is financial aid available?

Yes. The primary source of aid available for chiropractic students is in the form of student loan programs, yet Palmer also offers grants and employment opportunities through the U.S. Department of Education, and state-specific grants and scholarships. Weigh the price tag with the investment in you and your future. Palmer continues to have one of the lowest federal student-loan-default rates among all colleges and universities in the nation, not just chiropractic institutions—which means Palmer alumni are experiencing financial success and can pay back their student loans.

I’m a U.S. veteran. What does Palmer provide for vets?

Palmer is a full participant in the Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program, offering one year of full tuition to eligible veterans. See our Veterans Handbook for complete information.

What’s the average class size?

Our Davenport, Iowa, campus classes range in size from 100 to 200 students, depending on the time of year the class begins. Classes at Palmer’s San Jose, Calif., campus range between 20 and 50 students. At our Port Orange, Fla., campus, classes range between 30 and 80 students.
What's the curriculum like?

The curriculum includes extensive coursework in the basic sciences, chiropractic technique, chiropractic philosophy and business management. During the last year of classes, students work in a public Palmer Chiropractic Clinic, under the supervision of a doctor, and actively care for patients.

How difficult is the Doctor of Chiropractic program?

The program is an intense, graduate-level program. However, academic counseling is available and students can opt to take a reduced schedule. Palmer is sensitive to the academic needs of students and works with all students who request assistance.

Is Palmer accredited?

Yes. All three Palmer College campuses are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE). All campuses also are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). Both the CCE and NCA are accrediting bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

How much money do chiropractors make right out of school?

Incomes of recent graduates vary tremendously as a result of the varied choices available to them. Go to the Bureau of Labor Statistics website for more information on chiropractors’ salaries.

Will I need a bachelor's degree in addition to my Doctor of Chiropractic degree to practice?

Some states require doctors of chiropractic to prove they hold a bachelor’s degree for licensure. Be sure to check with the licensing body or bodies in the state or states where you plan to practice to ensure that you understand their requirements. The Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards maintains a directory of the licensure requirements for each state and certain countries.
Does Palmer offer job placement assistance?

Palmer cares about its graduating students' and recent graduates' futures. That's why our Palmer Center for Business Development exists.

The Palmer CareerNetwork assists graduating students and recent graduates in establishing their practices and in finding associateships, partnerships or externships. The office also serves established chiropractors in advertising the sale of their practices, helping to find associates or externs, and maintains used equipment listings. In addition, municipalities in need of a chiropractor often contact the office directly.

The Palmer Center for Business Development also helps prepare students for successful careers as clinic associates and as proprietors of their own private practices.

Palmer is committed to helping students and graduates achieve their professional goals.

Once I complete the program, can I practice anywhere I want?

Every state and many countries have licensing boards that require applicants to pass individual state board exams. In the U.S. there are four sections of National Board exams. Many states require a passing score on these exams to obtain a license to practice. In addition, some states, including Florida, require a background check prior to licensure. (Palmer College also requires a background check as part of its admission process. Complete information about this process can be found in our catalog.)

We strongly encourage you to visit the Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards' website, which provides specific information about licensure requirements based on the area in which one wishes to practice. Understanding these requirements before you begin on your path to a chiropractic career is a very good idea.
I’m interested in becoming a chiropractor and attending Palmer. What’s my next step?

We recommend three things:

1. Build a relationship with our Admission Representatives and gain continual support and advice through your education. They’ll champion with you and be there every step of the way as you work toward your educational goals.

   Talk with us today!

   ▶ Davenport, Iowa, campus (admissions.ia@palmer.edu)
   ▶ San Jose, Calif., campus (admissions.ca@palmer.edu)
   ▶ Port Orange, Fla., campus (admissions.fl@palmer.edu)

2. Visit campus. Each campus boasts a fantastic campus visit program, which has been called one of the best in the nation by a major enrollment management service.

3. Meet with one of our admissions representatives when they visit your area. Check out our Representative Travel Calendar or call us. We have admissions representatives who can answer your specific questions.

   ▶ Davenport, Iowa, campus (800) 722-3648
   ▶ San Jose, Calif., campus (866) 303-7939
   ▶ Port Orange, Fla., campus (866) 585-9677