



Chiropractic Newsletter

Discover Chiropractic

Birth to Bark: A Holistic Approach to Family Wellness Through Chiropractic

Introduction: The Family Pack Approach to Health

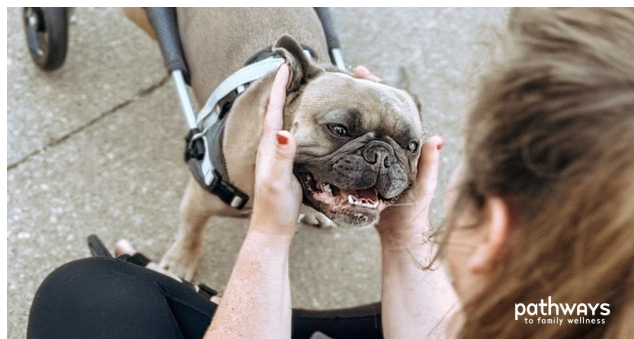
When you think of a family, what comes to mind? Parents, kids, maybe even a grandparent or two? For many of us, our family wouldn't be complete without our four-legged members—dogs, cats, and other pets who share our homes, hearts, and sometimes even our beds.

My babies happen to have four paws, and when I had a traumatic experience with my Aussiedoodle Belle, I knew I needed to continue my education to include animal chiropractic. What started as a personal journey quickly became a professional calling, as I realized just how much animals and humans share when it comes to stress, healing, and overall well-being. The connection between human and animal health runs deeper than most people recognize. Families who prioritize proactive, natural wellness for themselves often do the same for their pets, and the results are incredible.

Emerging research shows that early exposure to animals plays a major role in shaping a child's immune system, gut health, and emotional well-being. Combine that with chiropractic care, which supports optimal nervous system function for both kids and pets, and you have a powerful, holistic approach to raising a thriving family—one that truly embraces the concept of wellness from birth to bark.

Belle's Story: The Moment That Changed Everything

I have two amazing Aussiedoodle pups, Belle + Pepper, both of whom love to run and chase each other around for hours on end. One day, while driving down a country road to my sister's farm, the unthinkable happened—she fell out of my car window going 50 miles per hour. My heart stopped. I pulled over in a panic, expecting the worst. Miraculously, she stood up, disoriented and scared, but seemingly unharmed. But I knew better. Something was off. I called the emergency vet line, desperate for guidance, but no one called me back. My gut told me something wasn't right, so I did my own assessment, checking her movement and reactions. She was in shock, and so was I. It appeared she had no major medical issues, but I wanted her checked as soon as possible for chiropractic care. I watched firsthand as chiropractic care helped regulate her nervous system, bringing her body back



into balance after the trauma. I signed up for Animal Chiropractic school that night.

That moment changed everything for me. It made me realize that animals, just like people, experience everyday stress, trauma, and nervous system dysfunction—and they deserve care, too. My work with pediatric and family chiropractic naturally extended to animal chiropractic, and I haven't looked back since.

The Nervous System Knows No Species

If you've ever had a newborn with colic or a dog with mobility issues, you know that dysfunction in the nervous system can cause discomfort, stress, and even behavioral challenges. What many people don't realize is that the nervous system functions the same way in all mammals, whether human or canine.

Both children and pets rely on their nervous systems to regulate digestion, immune function, sleep, and overall well-being. When there's interference—whether from birth trauma, a fall, daily stress, or environmental factors like diet and toxin exposure—imbalances occur, leading to a host of common issues. In babies: colic, ear infections, digestive issues, poor sleep, and developmental delays. In pets: stiffness, poor digestion, anxiety, and decreased mobility.

Chiropractic adjustments work to restore proper nervous system function, allowing the body to heal and adapt more effectively. Just like an adjusted baby finds relief from colic or improved sleep, an adjusted pet often experiences better mobility, digestion, and emotional balance.

Interestingly, I often notice a pattern in my practice: When a

family welcomes a new baby, it's not long after that their dog starts showing signs of stress—whether physical or emotional. Some develop stiffness from sleeping in awkward positions, trying to be close to their owner more often, or playing too rough when they do get attention. Others exhibit behavioral changes like excessive licking, pacing, or acting out in an attempt to regain attention. It's a reminder that change affects the whole pack, and chiropractic care helps support that transition for everyone—two-legged and four-legged alike.

Building a Stronger Immune System from Birth

Parents today are bombarded with messages about how to “boost” their child's immune system—probiotics, supplements, immune-supporting foods. But one of the most natural immune builders is often right in our homes: pets.

A study published in *Pediatric Allergy and Immunology* found that babies exposed to dogs early in life had a more diverse gut microbiome, which is linked to stronger immune function and a reduced risk of allergies and asthma. Another study in *Microbiome* found that children raised with pets had an increased presence of beneficial gut bacteria—specifically *Ruminococcus* and *Oscillospira*—which play a role in preventing allergic conditions and even obesity.

Why does this matter? Because a well-developed gut microbiome is the foundation of long-term health. Nearly 80% of the immune system is housed in the gut, and early microbial exposure (from the dirt, dander, and bacteria our pets bring into the home) helps train a child's immune system to respond appropriately to environmental triggers—rather than overreacting with allergies, asthma, or autoimmune conditions.

Pair this with chiropractic care, which optimizes nervous system function to regulate immune responses, and you have a powerful, holistic approach to raising resilient, naturally healthy children.

Conclusion: Raising a Thriving Pack

At the end of the day, our families—kids, parents, and pets alike—deserve the best foundation for lifelong health. By embracing chiropractic care, early pet exposure, and natural health principles, we can reduce childhood illness, support emotional well-being, and create a healthier, more connected family unit.

So if you're a parent looking for ways to support your child's health naturally, don't overlook the furry family members already playing a role in their well-being. And if you don't have a pet yet, I know your kids have been begging for one—consider this your official sign to cave!

After all, raising a thriving family isn't just about what happens from birth to first steps—it's about birth to bark.

Final Thoughts

Want to learn more about how chiropractic can support your whole pack? Find a chiropractor trained in pediatric and animal care and start your family's journey to holistic wellness today!

-Callie Horstman, DC, CACCP, cAVCA

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