

SPEC Chiropractic Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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- 1. Which condition is listed as a contraindication to Thompson Drop therapy, mirroring HVLA contraindications?**
 - A. Osteoporosis**
 - B. Hypertension**
 - C. Allergy to NSAIDs**
 - D. Obesity**

- 2. Which scenario is a valid reason to order an X-ray in a chiropractic assessment?**
 - A. Fracture Suspicion**
 - B. Mild Muscle Strain**
 - C. Tension Headache**
 - D. Acute Sinus Infection**

- 3. Which option describes Unbundling?**
 - A. Billing separately for services that should be bundled; Billing exam & manipulation separately when they are part of a single visit package**
 - B. Paying fees for referrals**
 - C. Referring Medicare patients to an MRI machine you own**
 - D. Billing for a more expensive service than performed**

- 4. Lateral leg and great toe extension is primarily associated with which spinal nerve root?**
 - A. L3**
 - B. L5**
 - C. L4**
 - D. S1**

- 5. Which imaging modality provides best evaluation for suspected rotator cuff tears when persistent symptoms remain after initial management?**
 - A. X-ray**
 - B. CT**
 - C. Ultrasound**
 - D. MRI**

- 6. Who may request medical records with authorization in a personal injury/insurance context?**
- A. Neighbor**
 - B. Claims adjuster**
 - C. Hair stylist**
 - D. Random person**
- 7. Which tissues are highlighted by MRI when assessing the cervical spine for soft tissue abnormalities?**
- A. Nerve roots and blood vessels**
 - B. Disc, cord, soft tissue**
 - C. Vertebral bodies and bone marrow**
 - D. Facet joints and ligaments**
- 8. For a pregnant patient, what is the recommended positioning during adjustments?**
- A. Prone with pillows**
 - B. Supine with no support**
 - C. Side-lying with a cushion; avoid prone**
 - D. Standing with no support**
- 9. Medicare pays for which type of chiropractic care?**
- A. Active care**
 - B. Maintenance care**
 - C. Both**
 - D. None**
- 10. Stare Decisis is the principle of standing by things decided; what does it establish?**
- A. To stand by past decisions but not precedents**
 - B. To ignore previous rulings**
 - C. Stand by Things Decided; Legal Precedent**
 - D. To appeal decisions to a higher court**

Answers

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1. A
2. A
3. A
4. B
5. D
6. B
7. D
8. C
9. A
10. C

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Explanations

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1. Which condition is listed as a contraindication to Thompson Drop therapy, mirroring HVLA contraindications?

- A. Osteoporosis**
- B. Hypertension**
- C. Allergy to NSAIDs**
- D. Obesity**

The main idea is safety of spinal manipulation with a rapid thrust. Thompson Drop therapy delivers a quick impulse to the spine, and the strength of the bones determines how well they tolerate that impulse. In osteoporosis, bones are weakened and more prone to fracture or compression. That fragility makes any high-impulse technique risky, so osteoporosis is a contraindication for this type of therapy, just as it is for HVLA adjustments. The other options don't carry the same absolute safety concern. Uncontrolled hypertension isn't an automatic exclusion from manipulation—careful assessment and technique choice are used, but it isn't inherently contraindicating. An allergy to NSAIDs has no relevance to spinal manipulation. Obesity can complicate positioning or technique but isn't an outright contraindication to HVLA or drop therapies.

2. Which scenario is a valid reason to order an X-ray in a chiropractic assessment?

- A. Fracture Suspicion**
- B. Mild Muscle Strain**
- C. Tension Headache**
- D. Acute Sinus Infection**

Imaging is used when there is a real possibility of a structural bone injury. An X-ray is the most direct way to visualize bone and detect fractures, dislocations, or other osseous abnormalities that would change how you manage the patient. When there is a suspicion of fracture—for example after a trauma with localized bone tenderness, deformity, or the patient cannot bear weight—the X-ray is warranted to confirm or exclude a fracture and guide treatment or referral. Mild muscle strain involves soft tissue; X-rays won't show a strain and wouldn't typically alter management beyond ruling out a fracture. Tension headaches and acute sinus infections are usually diagnosed clinically and managed without imaging, unless red flags or atypical features appear that would justify further testing.

3. Which option describes Unbundling?

- A. Billing separately for services that should be bundled; Billing exam & manipulation separately when they are part of a single visit package**
- B. Paying fees for referrals
- C. Referring Medicare patients to an MRI machine you own
- D. Billing for a more expensive service than performed

Unbundling is billing separately for components that are normally billed as a single bundled service. In a single visit, the exam and the manipulation are typically part of one package, so billing them as separate line items goes beyond the intended bundled charge. This practice inflates charges and violates payer rules, which is why it's considered unbundling. The option that describes billing independently for parts that should be bundled captures this behavior exactly. Other choices describe different improper practices: paying fees for referrals relates to kickbacks or anti-kickback concerns; referring Medicare patients to an MRI you own is self-referral and regulated under Stark/anti-kickback laws; billing for a more expensive service than performed is upcoding, not unbundling.

4. Lateral leg and great toe extension is primarily associated with which spinal nerve root?

- A. L3
- B. L5**
- C. L4
- D. S1

Focusing on the nerves that control specific muscles (myotomes) helps explain this. The muscle that extends the big toe, the extensor hallucis longus, is mainly innervated by the L5 myotome via the deep peroneal nerve. The muscles on the lateral leg (fibularis longus and brevis) are primarily supplied by the superficial peroneal nerve, which carries roots from L4-S1, with L5 contributing strongly to dorsiflexion and eversion movements. Because both the ability to extend the great toe and the function of the lateral leg align most with L5, this root is the best match. L3 is mainly involved in knee extension and hip flexion, not big toe extension. L4 centers on dorsiflexion and patellar reflex, but big toe extension is more characteristic of L5. S1 governs plantar flexion and certain eversion actions, but it does not as reliably account for great toe extension.

5. Which imaging modality provides best evaluation for suspected rotator cuff tears when persistent symptoms remain after initial management?

- A. X-ray
- B. CT
- C. Ultrasound
- D. MRI**

When persistent shoulder symptoms raise suspicion for a rotator cuff tear, you need imaging that can clearly visualize the soft tissues of the shoulder. MRI provides high-resolution images of the rotator cuff tendons and surrounding muscles, allowing you to determine whether a tear is present, and if so, its type (partial- or full-thickness), size, and degree of retraction. It also assesses muscle quality, including atrophy and fatty degeneration, which are important for predicting prognosis and guiding treatment. In addition, MRI can evaluate related structures such as the biceps tendon, labrum, and the acromioclavicular joint, giving a complete picture for planning management or surgery. Other modalities have limitations: X-ray mainly shows bone and calcifications, CT excels at bone detail but not soft tissue, and ultrasound, while useful and dynamic, depends on the operator and may miss some partial-thickness tears. Thus MRI offers the most comprehensive assessment when symptoms persist after initial management.

6. Who may request medical records with authorization in a personal injury/insurance context?

- A. Neighbor
- B. Claims adjuster**
- C. Hair stylist
- D. Random person

The main idea here is that releasing medical information requires a legitimate purpose and patient consent. In a personal injury or insurance claim, the entity that handles the claim for the insurer—the claims adjuster—has a standard, legitimate reason to review medical records to verify treatment, causation, and damage amounts. With the patient's authorization, the adjuster can request and obtain those records to evaluate and settle the claim. A neighbor, hair stylist, or random person has no legitimate role in the claim process, so they wouldn't be appropriate recipients of medical records, even with authorization, unless the patient explicitly designates them to receive the records.

7. Which tissues are highlighted by MRI when assessing the cervical spine for soft tissue abnormalities?

- A. Nerve roots and blood vessels**
- B. Disc, cord, soft tissue**
- C. Vertebral bodies and bone marrow**
- D. Facet joints and ligaments**

MRI excels at distinguishing soft tissues, so in evaluating the cervical spine for soft tissue problems the structures that stand out are the ligaments and the facet joints. The ligaments (like the posterior longitudinal ligament and ligamentum flavum) and the synovial facets can undergo tears, strain, hypertrophy, or effusion, and MRI's high contrast makes these changes easy to see. This is especially important because ligamentous injury and facet arthropathy are common sources of persistent neck pain and stenosis, and MRI can reveal edema, thickening, or degenerative changes in these tissues. Nerve roots and blood vessels, while visible on MRI, are more about neural or vascular pathology than primarily soft tissue injury. Vertebral bodies and bone marrow reflect bone-related changes rather than soft tissue abnormalities, and discs or the spinal cord are other soft tissues that MRI can assess, but the question's focus on soft tissue abnormalities in the context of cervical spine pathology points to the ligaments and facet joints as the key structures highlighted.

8. For a pregnant patient, what is the recommended positioning during adjustments?

- A. Prone with pillows**
- B. Supine with no support**
- C. Side-lying with a cushion; avoid prone**
- D. Standing with no support**

Positioning during adjustments in pregnancy focuses on protecting blood flow and comfort. Lying on the back can compress the inferior vena cava as the uterus grows, reducing venous return and potentially causing dizziness or fetal stress. Prone positioning increases abdominal pressure and is generally not comfortable later in pregnancy. Side-lying with a cushion supports the spine and pelvis, reduces abdominal pressure, and provides a stable, safe position for the chiropractor to perform the adjustment. Standing with no support offers less stability and isn't the typical setup for most adjustments. In practice, left-side lying is often preferred to optimize venous return, with a cushion or bolster between the knees and under the abdomen as needed.

9. Medicare pays for which type of chiropractic care?

- A. Active care**
- B. Maintenance care**
- C. Both**
- D. None**

The main idea being tested is what type of chiropractic care Medicare covers. Medicare pays for active care—that is, hands-on, problem-focused treatment aimed at diagnosing or addressing a current spinal issue and is considered medically necessary. This typically includes manual manipulation of the spine when there is an identifiable condition that requires treatment. Maintenance care, in contrast, is ongoing, preventive care without an active problem or current symptoms, and Medicare generally does not reimburse that. So if a patient is coming in for routine adjustments to stay “in good shape” with no active condition, that wouldn’t be covered. In short, Medicare covers active care because it targets a diagnosed issue and is medically necessary, while maintenance care is not covered.

10. Stare Decisis is the principle of standing by things decided; what does it establish?

- A. To stand by past decisions but not precedents**
- B. To ignore previous rulings**
- C. Stand by Things Decided; Legal Precedent**
- D. To appeal decisions to a higher court**

Stare decisis means sticking with decided cases and using those outcomes to guide future decisions. It establishes legal precedent: once a court resolves a principle in a case, that principle becomes binding or persuasive for future cases with similar facts within the same jurisdiction. This creates consistency and predictability in the law, so judges, lawyers, and the public can anticipate how similar disputes will be treated. In practice, it means lower courts follow the rulings of higher courts and apply the same legal principles to new, comparable situations. The best option captures this by stating Stand by Things Decided; Legal Precedent. The other ideas don’t fit because one suggests standing by past decisions without precedent, which contradicts how those decisions become binding guidance; another suggests ignoring previous rulings, which defeats the purpose of consistency; and another describes appealing to a higher court, which is a different process and not what stare decisis governs.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://specchiropractic.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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