

Cranial Osteopathy

What does treatment involve?

An osteopath takes a detailed medical history from the patient followed by a careful examination. He/she will make a diagnosis of what is causing the symptoms, and try to put together the 'story' of why they have developed.

Using very subtle and gentle techniques, the accumulated stresses and strains in the body are gradually released.

The aim is to relieve the current symptoms and also improve the underlying health of the tissues as far as possible in order that they do not recur.

This type of treatment is suitable for everyone from newborn babies to the very elderly, being extremely gentle.

What does cranial treatment feel like?

Patients may feel sensations of pressure or warmth, either under the osteopaths hands or elsewhere. Most patients feel that gradually the tension is being drawn out of their body and they become deeply relaxed.

The benefits of treatment

Osteopathic treatment is aimed not only at the relief of symptoms, but towards helping the body function better in all respects.

Patients often report an improvement in general well being, energy levels, sleep patterns and also in areas of symptoms other than those that brought them to the osteopath in the first place.

What can Osteopaths treat?

Osteopaths treat the whole person not just the condition. Using the principles of osteopathy, a very wide variety of conditions can be helped, including:

- Back and neck pain
- Joint pain
- Headache and migraine
- Digestive disorders
- Period pain and irregularity
- Recurrent infection
- Sinusitis
- Asthma and chest complaints
- Stress, depression and fatigue
- General ill health
- Childhood problems
- (see *Osteopathy for Children* leaflet)

...and much more

FURTHER LEAFLETS AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES
INTRODUCTION TO OSTEOPATHY FOR CHILDREN
OSTEOPATHY AND DENTISTRY
OSTEOPATHY AS YOU GET OLDER
CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES
OSTEOPATHY DURING PREGNANCY
OSTEOPATHY AND BACK PAIN

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This text is based on clinical observation, and is produced for patient information.



About Osteopathy

The maintenance of good mechanical function is essential to good health. Problems in the framework of the body can disturb the circulatory system or nerves to any part of the body, and affect any aspect of health.

Thus mechanical problems can lead not only to aches and pains in joints and muscles, but also to disturbances in the internal organs and the way they work.

Osteopaths work to restore the musculoskeletal system of the body to a state of balance and harmony.

Health

Health is not simply the absence of disease or pain. It is a state of balance and harmony between the body and mind of a person.

In health a person should be able to respond to events such as accidents, infections or emotional stress, deal with these events and restore itself to optimum health afterwards.

The majority of people are not in full health, but are carrying an accumulation of the effects of different traumatic events that have happened to them during their life.

What is Cranial Osteopathy?

Cranial Osteopathy is a refined and subtle type of osteopathic treatment that uses very gentle manipulative pressure to encourage the release of stresses throughout the body, including the head.

It is extremely effective in treating a wide range of conditions in people of all ages, from birth to old age.

Why is Cranial Osteopathy different?

In their training, Osteopaths are taught a variety of treatment methods and techniques, ranging from the well known 'high velocity thrust' with its dramatic clicks, to the very gently applied methods used by so called 'cranial osteopaths'.

Osteopaths vary their treatment methods depending on their own preference and individual patients' problems. 'Cranial Osteopathy' is the name by which osteopaths who work at the more gentle, subtle end of the spectrum of different treatment approaches, have become known.

Osteopaths may have different specialities including sports injuries, paediatrics, visceral (treating the internal organs of the body). Cranial Osteopathy embraces all of these.

'Involuntary Motion' in the body

Cranial Osteopaths are trained to feel a very subtle, rhythmical shape change that is present in all body tissues. This is called involuntary motion.

The skull is made up of 26 bones which are intricately joined in such a way that during the rhythmical cycle of involuntary motion, the skull can actually change shape very slightly to accommodate the normal involuntary motion of the brain inside.

Impacts to the head can block or disrupt this movement. This can cause a very wide variety of problems both in the head and elsewhere in the body. Using involuntary motion in the tissues, osteopaths can feel whether a person is in an optimum state of health, or whether there is something preventing healthy movement of the tissues from occurring.

Accumulation of stress and strain in the body

Most of us have been exposed to physical trauma at some stage in our life. The body may have been able to absorb the effects an accident at the time, but a lasting strain often remains. Illnesses and emotional trauma can also leave a lasting physical effect.

Gradually the body may find it more and more difficult to cope with accumulated stresses, and symptoms may start to show.

CASE STUDY

When he is 6, James has a heavy fall out of a tree onto his bottom. He is bruised and sore for a few days, but soon forgets about it. Unknown to him, he still carries with him compressive strain in his sacrum and lumbar spine, and in the base of his skull.

At age 20, James then has a car accident in which he sustains a mild whiplash. All car accidents put enormous strain throughout the whole spine, and this adds to the existing strain from his fall as a child.

At age 30, when James is now also subjected to stress at work, he begins to develop headaches and a bit of backache. He decides to consult an osteopath who discovers that the top of the neck and base of the skull are compressed and immobile from the effects of the childhood fall and the car accident.

Treatment to release these retained strains restores the harmony of the body tissues, James is relieved of his headaches and backache, and also discovers that he has more energy, is sleeping better and coping better with the stress at work.