

What kind of problems do Osteopaths treat?

Osteopathy is most commonly known for treating a number of musculo-skeletal problems especially back pain, but we can also help manage a number of other conditions. When you consult us, we will always aim to diagnose and treat the cause rather than just the symptoms themselves. Here are some of the main conditions/problems we encounter:

- Backache
- Headache
- Joint and muscle strain
- Sciatica
- Osteoarthritis
- Repetitive Strain Injury
- Sports Injuries
- Pregnancy
- After surgery
- Children
- Cranial Osteopathy

Backache
This is the most common condition treated by osteopaths and affects up to 60% of the population at some stage in their lives. It is caused largely by over-straining the musculo-skeletal structure of the back but with prompt treatment can be very effectively treated.

Headache

Today's lifestyle means that more and more people are spending long periods of time sitting at computers or suffering from work-related stress. Headaches can be a direct result of tension in the neck and shoulders and will respond well to osteopathic treatment.

Joint and muscle strain

As we always aim to treat the whole condition, not just skeletal complaints, it can be very beneficial to receive osteopathic treatment for a range of peripheral joint and muscle aches and strains. This can include shoulders, arms, elbows, knees, legs, hips, feet, ankles, tendonitis etc.

Sciatica

This term is often used to refer to any pain experienced in the leg as it relates to the irritation of the sciatic nerve that supplies the leg. Conditions can range from circulatory problems, pain linked to a back injury, trauma etc. and will respond well to osteopathic treatment.

Osteoarthritis

As a natural part of the ageing process, arthritis is caused by the normal wear and tear of the joint surface. It does not affect everybody and usually only occurs in later life, if at all. Our most common complaint is a restriction in the movement of certain joints together with muscular aches and pains. Whilst treatment cannot reverse the deterioration of the joint surface, it may help to relieve the symptoms and give the patient help in changing lifestyle factors to manage this irreversible process more easily.

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)

This condition has arisen largely from the increased amount of time people are spending working at computers, but it can also refer to common sports injuries such as 'tennis elbow' or 'shin splints'. If treated early, we are able to treat the symptoms but long-term relief may also depend on minimising the causes of the condition.

Sports Injuries

We work alongside people participating in a variety of sports at all levels, treating localised conditions that arise from sporting injuries. We also help patients maintain and achieve a particular level of musculo-skeletal fitness by focusing on problem areas, developing stamina and increasing flexibility. We are actively involved with the Professional Windsurfing Association providing support and treatment at many events.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy can be an exciting and enjoyable time, but back pain or discomfort associated with pregnancy can hamper this otherwise memorable time. A great deal of back pain that can develop during pregnancy can be dealt with effectively with treatment.

The Most Common Complaints Associated With Pregnancy:

- Lower Back Pain
- Sciatica (leg pain)
- Neck, Shoulder, Middle Back Pain

Early stages of pregnancy are often associated with symptoms such as nausea and morning sickness due to the

hormonal changes in the body. This can also lead to headaches and fatigue.

However, as pregnancy progresses the baby's weight increases causing a shift in the centre of gravity of the body. There is also a softening of muscles and the supporting ligaments to prepare for labour.

This change in the body leads to added mechanical stress, and can cause symptoms such as generalised low back pain, sciatica from pressure on the nerve due to the position of the baby, pubic symphysis or sacro-iliac joint pain from ligamentous instability and accentuation of the normal curves of the spine.

How Does Osteopathy Fit In?

Osteopathy teaches that the body structure and its function are inter-related. This distinctive way of thinking applies to treatment of almost any injury, of any condition or change in state of health. Pregnancy is no exception. The goal of osteopathic treatment is to assist this natural process, maximising the body's ability to adjust and compensate for the changes as efficiently as possible.

Is It Safe?

Osteopathy has one of the best safety records of any medically related profession. The techniques used during pregnancy are carefully selected in order to minimise the risk. These techniques are gentle and the comfort of the mother is always assured.

Can Osteopathy Influence The Birth?

The descent of the baby through the pelvis is determined by a number of factors such as ligament laxity, gravity, position of the baby, and a number of others. If the mother's pelvis is mechanically unstable or is lacking mobility, it may interfere with the baby's passage through the birth canal making labour more difficult. Osteopathic treatment helps to restore balance and improve quality of movements of the whole pelvic girdle.

Should I Still See An Osteopath After The Birth?

There are a range of reasons why it is suggested that follow up treatment is necessary. Some women start to experience back problems or period pain only after the birth. This can be caused by weakened ligaments and lack of muscle strength, thereby weakening the whole structure.

Breast-feeding can lead to mid and upper back problems due to the position of feeding. Osteopathic treatment to this region can help ease this discomfort as well as promote better flow and lymphatic drainage to the breast area.

Your Osteopath can also provide you with advice on posture for breast feeding position, sleep and daily activities, and also exercises to strengthen abdominal muscles and the pelvic floor. Osteopathic treatment after delivery provides restoration of the normal mechanics of the back and pelvis optimising the return to a full and active life.

After surgery

Depending on the procedure we are able to help some patients regain flexibility and movement after surgery, minimising scarring and mobilising the body at a pace suitable for optimum efficiency.

Children

The gentle approach of Osteopathy makes it especially suitable for treating children, including new-born infants. Children may develop structural problems from a variety of causes including:

- Difficulties during pregnancy or labour
- Childhood accidents and falls
- Infections or inflammatory conditions
- Genetic or developmental disorders

Osteopathic care and treatment can assist in easing a wide variety of conditions, either solely or alongside other disciplines.

Structure and Function

Structural problems, such as those affecting the proper mobility and function of the body's framework, can lead to a range of problems. These may include:

- Postural – such as a scoliosis
- Respiratory dysfunction – such as asthma
- Manifestations of brain injury – such as cerebral palsy and spasticity
- Developmental – delayed physical progress, perhaps triggering learning or behaviour difficulties
- Recurrent infections – such as ear and throat infections or urinary disturbances

Before any treatment takes place, the Osteopath will take comprehensive case history of both the mother and the child, and complete an examination of the child, including requesting any medical tests where appropriate. This will determine if osteopathic treatment is appropriate, or if there is need for a referral to their G.P.

On examination, using the palpatory skills which osteopaths are known for, the practitioner can identify where the child's structure has been disrupted and treatment can be directed to assist in the resolution of the dysfunction.

The Fluidity of the body

Osteopaths recognise that the body is fluid and has developed to move. Along with the obvious movements, such as crawling and walking, the recognition of the importance of circulation of blood, respiration, the progression of food through the gut and elimination of waste products are also acknowledged as of value to health. Treatment is directed at maintaining the fluidity of the body mechanisms. A useful analogy is that of a pond; if a pond becomes stagnant and has no exchange of water then life within the pond begins to cease.

Osteopaths also understand that the body is constantly adjusting its musculo-skeletal system during activity, to maintain a sense of balance in the body and to keep the eyes and ears level. This sense of balance is one of the central themes of osteopathy, and patients will be given advice on play exercises for the child and for the parent to assist the child in developing balance and co-ordination.

Whole body evaluation

Osteopaths believe that the body is dynamic and that each region of the body is intrinsically interconnected with every other region. For this reason, Osteopaths recognise that symptoms in a particular region of the body may not necessarily be caused by a problem in that area. For instance:

- Headaches may be caused by spinal trauma or low back problems
- Low back problems may be the sequel to a hip, knee or foot injury

Disturbances of the infant's head or body structure, that may be the result of a difficult labour, may lead to breathing difficulties or colic.

Most importantly, it is recognised that within every child there are inherent self-healing and self-regulating mechanisms, which when functioning effectively will restore normal health. Osteopaths can assist and enhance these processes to enable a quick progression to full health.

Because Osteopaths look at the entire picture of human functioning, they use a variety of techniques which acknowledge the many factors that contribute to balance and health. Therefore, Osteopaths will provide advice on diet, exercise, posture and many other aspects of daily life. This comprehensive approach to care and treatment complement the body's natural functions and can help children achieve the highest possible level of health.

Cranial Osteopathy

Cranial Osteopathy for adults can be a very deep influence on tension states and hormonally irritated problems. Period problems in particular can be assisted. Please speak to our cranial Osteopath, Tom Conba, for further information.

Other areas of management include the formulation of an individual exercise program, with emphasis on breathing exercises and the avoidance of aggravating factors. The osteopath also provides advice on diet, posture, lifestyle and first aid measures during an attack.

What will happen?

Before any treatment, an osteopath always conducts a full examination, using conventional medical tests where necessary. A full medical case history will be taken, including any accidents, illnesses, operations and any other factors which may contribute to reduced health.

As part of this process, the osteopath will assess whether osteopathic treatment is the best option, or whether the patient should be referred to another practitioner. Occasionally a combination of osteopathy and other treatment may be the most appropriate approach for the patient.

What kind of treatment does an osteopath provide?

During the physical examination, the osteopath uses sensitive palpatory skills, to identify where a patient's structure has been disturbed. Osteopathic treatment involves soft tissue techniques, along with articulation and mobilisation of the joints. The treatment is gentle and conducted with the patient's assistance.