

Maintaining Your Well Being

What about long term preventative care?

The key to long-term healthy living is taking responsibility and understanding the importance of the musculo-skeletal system. Osteopaths believe that repetitive visits for more treatments are not the best solution. Once a rehabilitation programme has been established and the problem has been 'resolved', the patient must maintain their programme and physical health for a long-term solution. An osteopath aims to increase the patient's awareness by highlighting causative factors and identify more efficient and less strenuous methods in their activities in the home and at work.

Seasonal tip:

The gardening season is now in full swing and like sport is the source of a number of injuries that are entirely preventable.

Before the next enthusiastic digging, weeding and pruning session, take time to consider how your muscles and bones may react to the effort.

A standing task such as hedge trimming, for example, tends to throw the body weight all onto one side and then bends forward at the waist. This can load the base of the back and pelvic joints, occasionally to excess.

Start your gardening properly by wearing loose fitting warm clothing that covers the small of the back.. Add to this sturdy boots and before picking up any tools take a brisk walk around your garden (or to the end of the road and back) to get some deep breathing going and the blood flowing.

Once the circulation has been stimulated, try some simple stretches starting with the arms and shoulders, neck and chest before involving the hips, thighs and calves. DON'T immediately stretch the back by bending forward to touch the floor! This old fashioned stretch continues to be used and can provoke more pain than it solves.

Similarly bending sharply backwards can be detrimental so the tip is to start slowly and keep the blood flowing. Try crouching down into a ball... or if the knees don't like that one, sitting on a seat and leaning forward to drop the chest onto the top of the thighs, always 'listening' to the responses of the back before continuing. Other stretches may be found on the 'Exercise of the month' page.

Once warmed up to the task, try to vary the jobs that need doing so that the body gets a little of everything rather than being repeatedly annoyed! Take breaks! Where possible use long handled tools. Take extreme care with loading wheelbarrows, which should really be the type with more than one wheel at the front for stability. Don't be afraid to use small shovels and take modest loads rather than larger loads.

With a little thought for the loads being applied to the system, particularly if it's the first outing of the season, all should be well. Enjoy the summer!!