



Riverview Clinic

Osteopathic Information Service

What is Osteopathy?

- Osteopathy recognises that much of the pain and disability we suffer stems from abnormalities in our body's structure and function.
- Osteopaths diagnose and treat problems with muscles, ligaments, nerves and joints to help the body's natural healing ability.
- Treatment involves gentle, manual techniques – easing pain, reducing swelling and improving mobility. Often, this involves manipulation which can result in an audible 'pop' which is simply the sound of gas bubbles popping in the fluid of the joints.
- Osteopathy does not involve the use of drugs or surgery.

The scourge of back pain

- Lower back pain now affects two-thirds of the adult population Ireland; it is the nation's leading cause of disability.
- Four out of five people will suffer back pain lasting more than a day at some point in their lives.
- Back pain is very common in children. Around 50% of children in Europe experience back pain at some time.

Back pain – causes and effects

The trouble with back pain is that it can do more than just give you a pain in the back. It can create difficulties with walking, sitting, bending and lifting and can even lead to depression and incontinence. It can also be the cause of pain in the buttocks, groin or legs (commonly called sciatica), in the head, neck, shoulders and arms. It can also be one of the effects of hip, knee and foot problems.

Back pain can result from bad posture, a sudden jerky movement, a lumpy mattress or poor lifting techniques. It can also be caused by injury in a work place, by a sports accident or by muscular spasms. It often occurs during pregnancy or, because of decreased flexibility, as people get older.

There are also many diseases and pathological conditions that can lead to back pain. These include abdominal or pelvic disease, anxiety, arthritis, cervical or lumbar spondylosis, dermatological problems, kidney disease, rheumatic conditions, tumours and scoliosis.

Our modern, sedentary lifestyles have a profound effect on the development of back pain; indeed one of the most effective ways of preventing it is simply to stay active.

An average adult in Ireland spends at least two hours a day in front of a computer screen or television set, and back problems can be triggered if they don't sit properly.

In an age of mobile phones and computer games, such troubles are increasingly inflicting children of school age as well.

Osteopathy and the treatment of back pain

Osteopathic treatment is often the most effective first line of attack in correcting problems caused by back pain. Speedy access to osteopathic care for acute patients often averts the possibility of conditions becoming chronic.

By correcting any underlying mechanical disturbances in the musculo-skeletal system, osteopaths can greatly relieve pain and distress, minimise dependency on drugs and slash the cost of treatment for side effects.

Osteopathic treatment often negates the need for further medical investigation or surgery, although osteopaths are skilled in diagnosing problems that require such investigation or treatment.

Back problems account for over 50% of the cases osteopaths see.

Ten top tips for back care

1. For back pain, better to see your osteopath sooner than later.
2. Take regular exercise – your osteopath can say what's right for you.
3. Hours in one position can cause problems – avoid computer 'hump'.
4. During repetitive tasks, vary your rhythm and take frequent breaks.
5. Adjust car seats and on long journeys, take regular breaks to stretch.

6. Pace yourself with heavy work such as gardening – don't risk a disc!
7. Watch children's posture – they shouldn't carry bags on one shoulder or spend too long at a computer without breaks.
8. During pregnancy, osteopathy can help your body adjust to changes.
9. Avoid strain when lifting, particularly small children and shopping.
10. Your bed could be part of the problem. Seek osteopathic advice on choosing a new one.