



Riverview Clinic

Osteopathic Information Service

What is pain?

Pain is your body's way of telling you that something is wrong. It is often caused by swelling of tissue, which creates pressure on nerves and leads to discomfort. Pain is a useful mechanism to alert you to a problem, and stops you from damaging your body further. It should always, therefore, be taken seriously.

Pain can affect many areas of the body, but particularly the lower back, head, neck, joints and legs. It can result from injuries and arthritis, and can also manifest itself in the form of rheumatic pain and period pain.

Osteopathy and the treatment of pain

Osteopaths can diagnose the cause of pain and help to ease it by reducing tissue inflammation. Treatment methods range from massage of muscles and connective tissues to manipulation and stretching of joints. This helps to reduce muscle spasm, to increase mobility and to create a healthier state in which damaged tissues can heal.

Much long-term, recurrent pain is caused by degenerative changes to the body's framework. Nobody can reverse this process of ageing, but osteopathic treatment may still ease pain. Pain control is an important part of treatment and osteopaths give guidance on simple self-help methods to use at home.

The skilled techniques of osteopathy can often allow you a speedy return to normal activity. If you have had a pain for a long time, and other forms of treatment have not helped, osteopathic treatment can be beneficial, although it may require time and patience.

Key points to remember...

- Osteopaths are skilled health care professionals.
- Osteopaths deal with pain every day.
- Osteopaths treat six million people suffering from pain each year.
- Osteopaths can help you with treatment and advice on self help.
- Osteopaths treat acute and chronic pain.
- Osteopaths can help prevent pain from recurring.

Visiting an osteopath

On your first visit, and before examination begins, the osteopath will discuss and record your medical history in detail. You will then normally be asked to remove some of your clothing so that a series of observations and biomechanical assessments can be performed.

The osteopath will then apply a highly developed sense of touch to identify points of weakness or excessive strain throughout the body. Further investigations may include an x-ray or blood test.

This will allow a full diagnosis of the problem and will enable the osteopath to tailor a treatment plan to your needs.

Your osteopath should make you feel at ease and tell you what is happening throughout your consultation. You should ask questions if you have any concerns. If further medical treatment is needed the osteopath may contact your doctor, with your permission.