



Riverview Clinic

Osteopathic Information Service

Work Strain

Occupational injuries account for many for the 35,000 working days a year lost in Ireland.

Osteopaths are skilled at discovering underlying causes of pain. Trained to have a thorough understanding of anatomy and physiology, they use their hands to investigate and treat injuries to the ligaments, muscles and joints.

Poor posture can contribute to daily aches and pains whether you lift heavy loads, sit at the PC incorrectly or drive for long periods. An osteopath can advise on correct posture and movement and can give instruction on back care and preventative exercises.

Common problems

Significant types of illnesses due to work are disorders of the muscles, tendons and joints (particularly in the back, hands and arms). Symptoms vary from mild aches and pains to severe pain and disability.

• Problems caused by manual handling and lifting:

- Muscle and tendon injuries.
- Intervertebral disc lesions ('slipped disc').
- Sciatica.

• Problems caused by forceful or repetitive movements:

- Carpal tunnel syndromes.
- Tenosynovitis.
- Peritendinitis.
- Epicondylitis.
- Epicondylitis (e.g. 'tennis elbow').
- Mouse wrist.

• Problems caused by unsuitable posture or repetitive movements:

- Low back pain.
- Neck and shoulder pain.

- Computer hump.
- Repetitive Strain Injury.

For the employer

- For years, a number of large companies have retained osteopaths as part of their permanent company health teams. Many smaller companies have also benefited from liaison with their local osteopaths.
- Having an osteopath involved in your staff care programmes can lead to a fitter workforce and improved morale, increased productivity and less time off through ill-health.

For the employee

- Most of the osteopaths in Ireland work from private practices, however many GPs are working more closely with osteopaths and can offer the option of referring patients to an osteopath on the NHS.
- Many people consult an osteopath privately. Telephone local practices for fees in your area.
- Many private health insurance schemes now cover osteopathic treatment (discuss the details with your company).
- You do not need to consult your GP before you visit an osteopath although you may choose to do so.
- Osteopaths can provide you with a sick note if you need time off work.

Visiting an osteopath

On your first visit, and before examination begins, the osteopath will discuss and record your medical history in detail.

To help reach a full diagnosis, your osteopath will need to know about your job:

- Is your work repetitive?
- Do you have much heavy lifting?
- Do you have to bend and twist frequently?
- Do you have to work in an awkward posture?
- Does your work involve frequent finger, hand or arm movements?
- Do you have any work breaks?
- Are you working in difficult conditions?
- Do you sit down at work and for how long?
- Do you spend a great deal of your day on the telephone?
- Are you expected to work to deadlines?
- Of the tasks you perform, which cause you the most discomfort?

- What is your working relationship with peers and employers?
- Have you received training in how to prevent risks at work?

You will then normally be asked to remove some of your clothing so that a series of observations and biomechanical assessments can be made.

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.