What is osteopathy?

Osteopathy is a distinct approach to healthcare based on a well established system of clinical diagnosis. Osteopaths focus on the structure of the body, using safe, natural, manual treatment which offers a caring approach to the individual needs of each patient - at all stages of life from birth to old age.

Predominantly gentle manipulative techniques are used to correct joint and tissue imbalances, allowing restoration of harmony within the patient’s body.

Osteopathy treats the person, not just the disorder. The objective is the promotion of long term health.

When & where did it start?

It was an American Doctor, Andrew Taylor Still, who in 1874 coined the word “osteopathy” and laid down the fundamental principles. Dr Still, through his clinical experiences, discoveries and inspiration, was the first physician to realise fully the profound relationship between the structure of the body and the way in which it functions.

Still’s interpretation of cause and effect in the evolution of disease gives osteopathy a very special place in the history of the healing arts.

What can it help treat?

Osteopathy can help provide relief for the body’s structural, mechanical and functional problems in people of all ages. Here are just a few examples:

- Muscle spasms
- Sports injuries
- Arthritic pain
- Back pain
- Sciatica
- Tension
- Neuralgia
- Frozen shoulder

Osteopaths provide over 850,000 consultations a year

What is the scope of osteopathic healthcare?

Osteopaths do not prescribe drugs nor any other intrusive treatments. Instead their skill lies in their highly trained sense of touch which enables their hands to diagnose and treat the underlying causes of pain. If problems arise in the musculo-skeletal system (bones, joint capsules, muscles, connective tissues etc), whether through injury, poor posture, stress, strain or disease, then the body’s nerve impulses and circulatory mechanisms can be affected and problems will result. The maintenance of proper mechanical function, therefore, is essential to good health but, it must be stressed, osteopaths also consider other possible aspects of disease causation including emotional, nutritional, bacteriological and developmental factors. Each and every patient is unique and must be viewed as a whole person.

As osteopaths do not work in isolation, in certain cases they may refer a patient to another therapist or back to their GP. Differential diagnoses and patient evaluation are an important part of osteopathic training, therefore osteopaths are well equipped to recognise whether their skills are relevant.

Is osteopathic treatment for everyone?

Although perhaps best known for the treatment of back pain, osteopathy is effective in a very wide range of conditions. The emphasis, however, is on the patient as an individual rather than on the symptoms they experience. For example, the osteopath does not treat back pain but rather the mechanical causes of the patient’s disturbed state of health. Functional problems as diverse as digestive, respiratory or circulatory symptoms, or pregnancy-related symptoms, may respond very well to osteopathy.

Work related injuries, caused by heavy lifting or repetitive movements, can also take their toll on the body’s framework. At every age osteopathic healthcare has much to offer - from pregnancy and childbirth through to the health problems of the elderly.

It is estimated that 24,000 patients consult osteopaths each working day

Over 10 million working days are being lost each year due to back pain

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What is the status of the osteopathic profession?

Statutory recognition was achieved with the passage of the Osteopaths Act in 1993, thereby making osteopathy the first complementary healthcare profession to be accorded a statutory regulated framework. In the same year the British Medical Association recognised osteopathy as being a “discrete clinical discipline”.

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) sets standards of training and professional and ethical conduct for the whole profession (www.osteopathy.org.uk). Only those who satisfy the GOsC’s requirements are admitted to its register and are entitled to call themselves an osteopath. Thus, a patient consulting an osteopath is afforded the same safeguards as when visiting a doctor or any other statutory regulated healthcare professional.

Most patients consult an osteopath privately, although some 20% are referred formally by their GPs. It is increasingly recognised that osteopathy has much to offer the NHS, not only in terms of patient care but also by significantly reducing costs. An increasing number of osteopaths are working within GP practices.

Does osteopathic treatment hurt?

Osteopathic treatment is not usually painful, though the nature of some conditions is such that some discomfort may be felt. Many techniques are extremely gentle. In devising a treatment plan, the osteopath will take into account the nature of the symptoms and also the patient’s concerns. The osteopath will not perform a technique on a patient unless the patient is happy for him/her to proceed.

Some patients are anxious about the “cracking” of joints. These are known as “High Velocity Thrust” (HVT) techniques and are an effective way of mobilizing a joint that is not moving very well. Again, the osteopath will only proceed with such a technique when it is appropriate to do so and with the patient’s permission.

What to expect on your first visit to an osteopath

When you first consult an osteopath, a full medical history will be taken. You will be examined using diagnostic procedures similar to those of conventional medicine. In addition, a detailed assessment will be made of your musculo-skeletal system.

You will be asked to remove your outer clothing so that the mobility of your body can be evaluated by performing a series of simple movements that allow the osteopath to identify areas of strain, weakness or injury. Lifestyle, work, sporting and leisure activities will also be taken into account. After reaching a diagnosis the osteopath will explain to you the treatment plan that is proposed. Initial consultations usually last about 1hr 30mins.

Children’s clinic

Many people believe that babies and children are too young and pliable to suffer from any structural stresses and strains, but in reality they do. Birth itself can be a very stressful time for the baby, both physically and emotionally. If there are difficulties and complications with the birth, this can put immense strain on certain structures within the baby’s body. Left untreated, these may cause problems in later life.

Maternity clinic

Osteopathy can be of great benefit to pregnant women, as they have to cope with a whole range of symptoms from back pain to heartburn and morning sickness. As the baby grows in the uterus, the extra weight causes the centre of gravity of the body to change. As a result, the mother’s posture can change from week to week. Treatment throughout pregnancy can help the body adapt to the changes that are taking place. The safety of the mother and baby is the osteopath’s first concern.

Sports injury clinic

Treatment of sports injuries includes massage, gentle rhythmical movements (harmonics), stretching, articulatory and manipulative techniques, as well as treatments unique to osteopathy such as “functional” and “cranial”. Emphasis is placed on increasing the range of movement, decreasing muscle tension, and improving circulation of the blood vessels and lymphatic system. The effect of this is to decrease swelling and pain, thereby enhancing the body’s self-healing process.
What is a teaching clinic?

When training, each student has to complete 1000 hours in clinic before the end of the course.

The ESO teaching clinic is where 3rd and 4th year students become responsible for osteopathic consultation. This includes taking case histories as well as applying actual osteopathic treatment.

All students are closely supervised by a clinic tutor (a registered osteopath) whilst treatments are carried out. Other students may enter the room to observe at any point.

Does the same person treat me each time?

The general policy of the clinic is that a patient will see the same student practitioner. If this is not possible, due to holidays, clinic rotas etc, this will be highlighted when booking the appointment.

There may be some cases where a patient requests a male or female student practitioner. The same policy applies as above, but the clinic will endeavour to meet the needs and requirements of the patient.

Do I need a GP referral?

It is not necessary to be referred by your GP and most of our patients make an appointment directly with the clinic. However, should you have concerns you may prefer to speak to your GP first.

If your osteopath feels it is necessary for you to see your GP, he/she will let you know and, with your permission, will also contact them to provide details of examination findings or to request further information.

How many treatments will I need?

The number of treatments a patient requires is entirely dependent on the severity of the condition. After the first consultation a plan of treatment will be recommended.

Is treatment expensive?

As a registered charity and teaching clinic the ESO Clinic offers very competitive pricing for treatments. Please ask at reception for our latest prices and special offers.

Why should I choose the ESO Clinic?

The ESO Clinic, based in Maidstone, has been providing osteopathic treatment to the local community since 1978. The consistently high quality of clinical training provided is well known across the area and the fact that we carry out over 20,000 treatments a year bears testimony to this. We also have 26 treatment rooms, 3 of which have easy access for disabled or mobility impaired patients, a large, free car park and can often offer same day appointments.

How do I book my first appointment?

For further information or to book a consultation at our Maidstone based teaching clinic, please contact:

The ESO Clinic
104 Tonbridge Road
Maidstone
Kent
ME16 8SL
01622 685989

Alternatively, please visit:

www.eso-clinic.co.uk

The ESO Clinic has been providing osteopathic treatment since 1978

98% of ESO patients would recommend the Clinic to a friend or relative