



Clinic Newsletter

Posture & Pain!

Have you ever carried two bags through the airport, one bag weighing a few pounds more than the other? How did that feel? Did you feel pain because gravity exposed one side of your body to more tension than the other? Were you unbalanced? You don't have to carry bags through the airport to be unbalanced. Poor posture results in an unbalanced body. If you ignore it, chronic pain, if you don't already experience it, could persist on and off for years.

Poor posture usually results in the head leaning forward of rounded shoulders. The pelvis tilts forward making your stomach and bottom protrude and the chest collapse - *Not exactly a picture of self-confidence and health!*

Tremendous strain is exerted on your back and neck muscles from carrying the extra weight created by your forward leaning posture. A recent publication illustrated that for every inch your head is forward of your shoulders, the effective weight of your head is doubled. Your head weighs about 5kg. If it is 2 inches forward of your shoulders, your neck muscles carry an extra 10kg all day (*that's 4 large bags of potatoes!*) whether you are standing or sitting! (Makes you realize just how strong your muscles are though doesn't it!)

Body pain occurs because your body weight combines with posture and gravitational forces to exert excessive tension and pressure on your muscles, ligaments and misaligned joints.

Protecting Your Back

The more delicate structures of your back include the spinal cord, nerves, intervertebral discs and small facet joints. These are protected by ligaments and muscles. Muscles enable movement at joints; ligaments stop joints from moving too far!

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Muscles are strongest when they are in "easy normal position". Try this simple test: make a tight fist with your wrist straight. Now try bending your fist first forwards, then backwards. Did you notice that you couldn't clench your fist so tight when your wrist was bent? This is because when your wrist bent forwards, the fist muscles were shortened and when it was bent backwards they were lengthened. This weakened the strength of your wrist muscles. The same thing happens when you bend your back forwards to pick something up from the floor or if you lean backwards to stretch and lift something off a high shelf.

Muscles are most often injured because they have been overloaded. If you use muscles when they are compromised i.e. over-stretched you are more likely to overload and therefore injure them.

Protecting Your Back Recommendations

Variety: too much of any single activity leads to trouble. Organise tasks to relieve cumulative strains by changing posture or tasks e.g. when gardening do 10 minutes weeding kneeling, then 10 mins pruning then 10 mins digging. When sitting at a computer, take a break for 5 minutes every hour and stand up and move around, maybe do some filing or walk around whilst on the telephone.

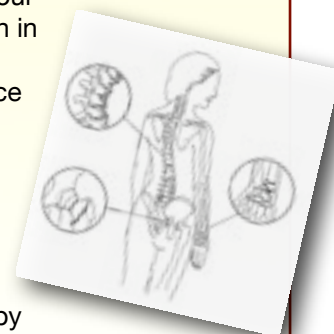
There is NO correct sitting posture: sitting position should be changed regularly and frequently – the best chair is one that allows a variety of positions to be adopted.

Avoid bending or twisting your spine particularly when lifting but also when sitting for prolonged periods: this avoids injury to discs and ligaments and reduces strain on smaller stabilising muscles as well as big lifting muscles.

When lifting keep torques to a minimum:

- keep load/object close to your body
- Bend your hips and knees before your back

Direct forces through your low back: keep your hand direction in line with your waist to reduce the forces through your spine e.g. push vacuum cleaner from waist, open heavy doors by pulling towards waist.



Sports Injuries & Maximising Performance

For young adults, injuries during a time of rapid growth coupled with a peak of physical activity can lay up a store of problems later in life; the body compensates automatically to avoid pain and further injury – this can lead to extra strain on other joints.

Conversely older people have previous injuries, postural and work-related compensations, which may adversely affect their performance and lead to a prematurely sedentary lifestyle. E.g. a stiff right hip from years of climbing into the cab of a lorry may lead to extra strain on the back when twisting and reaching whilst playing squash.

In the past, sports-related injuries have been examined and treated as separate problems - treatment has been only to the injured part. Nowadays osteopathic treatment is increasingly popular because osteopaths consider all the factors that may have led up to and contributed to the problem and which are often just as important as the injury itself.

An osteopath will examine the posture, strength and flexibility of the muscles, ligaments and tendons of joints - all the parts that make the human body a dynamic machine. Poor flexibility in a joint will prevent the body performing at its best - whether it is dancing or football - and is often a contributory element to injury.

Osteopathy for Children & Babies

It is a common belief that babies and children should have no structural stresses or strains in their bodies, because they are 'so young'. The reality is very different. Birth is one of the most stressful events of our lives. The baby is subjected to enormous forces, as the uterus pushes to expel the baby against the natural resistance of the birth canal. The baby has to turn and twist as it squeezes through the bony pelvis, on its short but highly stimulating and potentially stressful journey.

The baby's head has the remarkable ability to absorb these stresses in a normal delivery. In order to reduce the size of the head, the soft bones overlap, bend and warp as the baby descends. The baby's chin is normally well tucked down towards its chest to reduce the presenting diameter of the head.

Many babies are born with odd shaped heads as a result. In the first few days, the head can usually be seen to gradually lose the extreme moulded shape, as the baby suckles, cries and yawns. However, this un-moulding process is often incomplete, especially if the birth has been difficult. As a result, the baby may have to live with some very uncomfortable stresses within its head and body sometimes causing:

- Excessive crying, screaming & irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Feeding difficulties, wind or colic
- Recurrent infections.

Cranial osteopathic treatment is gentle, safe and effective for babies and children. Very specific, skilled, light pressure is applied where necessary to assist the natural ability of the body to release stresses and tensions.

Arthritis - Osteopathy & Naturopathy Can Help

Arthritis is the most common symptom of getting older. It can occur in many of the joints in the body, while some joints such as the hips and knees are more vulnerable than others. Joints can be swollen or enlarged and are often stiff, particularly on initially moving a joint after resting or after over-use.

The body can be likened to a car, in that it needs regular servicing and maintenance as it gets older! Osteopaths treat the whole person not just conditions, and so a very wide variety of different problems can be helped. Osteopathic treatment is aimed at releasing strains and stresses that have accumulated in the body over many years, thus improving mobility and the circulation to all parts of the body as well as improving circulation, strength and mobility of the painful joints.

Sometimes only a few treatments are needed; other people may take benefit from regular treatment, or an occasional "service" every few months to keep everything working well. As a result, the rate of joint deterioration can be slowed and there is often an improvement in many different aspects of health.



SAFE IN OUR HANDS CERTIFICATION MARK

The Certification Mark 'Safe in our hands' shows that osteopaths are registered with the General Osteopathic Council. The title 'Osteopath' is protected by law in the UK. The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) was set up under The Osteopaths Act 1993 and is one of the 13 UK health and social care statutory regulators. The regulators are set up to protect the public so that whenever a member of the public visits a health or social care professional, they can be sure they meet the required standards.