



# OSTEOPATHIC INFORMATION SERVICE

## OSTEOPATHY: Work Strain

Occupational injuries account for many for the 350 million working days a year lost in Britain.

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.

### 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 'crack' 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.

### 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 moral, increased productivity and less time off through ill-health.

### **For the employee**

- . □ Most of the 3500 osteopaths in the UK 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.

### **Osteopathy and patient protection**

Patients consulting an osteopath have the same safeguards and rights as when consulting a doctor or dentist. Osteopathy is an established system of diagnosis and treatment, recognised by the British Medical Association as a distinct clinical discipline.

Under the Osteopaths Act of 1993, osteopathy was accorded statutory recognition, and the title “osteopath” protected by law. In the UK it is now a criminal offence to describe oneself as an osteopath unless registered with the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC).

The GOsC regulates, promotes and develops the profession, maintaining a Statutory Register of those entitled to practise. Practitioners on the Register meet the highest standards of safety and competency. They have provided proof of good health, good character and have professional indemnity insurance.

Osteopathic training is demanding and lengthy, and a recognised qualification is only available from osteopathic educational institutions accredited by the GOsC. Trainee osteopaths study anatomy, physiology, pathology, biomechanics and clinical methods during a four or five year honours degree programme. Such wide-ranging medical training gives osteopaths the skills to diagnose conditions when osteopathic treatment is not advisable, and the patient must be referred to a GP for further investigation.

Osteopaths are committed to a programme of continuing professional development.

You can obtain details of an osteopath’s registration by telephoning the GOsC on **020 7357 6655**.

### **Finding an osteopath near you**

To find an osteopath near you, details are available in Thomson and Yellow Pages directories.

Alternatively contact the GOsC directly at: Osteopathy House 176 Tower Bridge Road London SE1 3LU Tel: 020 7357 6655 Email: [info@osteopathy.org.uk](mailto:info@osteopathy.org.uk)  
[www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)

Osteopaths specialising in the treatment of work strain have links with the following organisations: The Ergonomics Society [www.ergonomics.org.uk](http://www.ergonomics.org.uk) 01509 234904 Health Sure UK [www.healthsureuk.com](http://www.healthsureuk.com) 0141 3317770 Osteopaths for Industry [www.btinternet.com/~ofi.services](http://www.btinternet.com/~ofi.services) 01372 477191

### Further information

This leaflet is one of a series of information leaflets for the public. Please contact us for copies of the following:

- .  Osteopathy: An introduction to Osteopathy and the GOsC
- .  Osteopathy: Arthritis
- .  Osteopathy: Babies and children
- .  Osteopathy: Back Pain
- .  Osteopathy: Choosing a Bed and choosing a bed
- .  Osteopathy: Driving
- .  Osteopathy: Pain Relief
- .  Osteopathy: Pregnancy
- .  Osteopathy: Sports

**For further information and lists of local practitioners please contact the Osteopathic Information Service, General Osteopathic Council, Osteopathy House, 176 Tower Bridge Road, London, SE1 3LU. Telephone number 0207 357 6655 or alternatively use our searchable database on [www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)**