

Osteopathy and patient protection

Osteopaths are trained to recognise and treat many causes of pain. Osteopathy is an established system of diagnosis and manual treatment, which is recognised by the British Medical Association as a discrete clinical discipline.

Sine the 1930s, osteopaths have worked within a system of voluntary regulation that set standards of training and practice.

Osteopathy became the first major complementary health care profession to be accorded statutory recognition under the 1993 Osteopaths' Act. This culminated in the opening of the statutory Register of Osteopaths by the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) in May 1998. Only those practitioners able to show that they were in safe and competent osteopathic practice were allowed onto the register. Practitioners at the Tarka Clinic were the first in Devon to be registered with the GOsC.

All osteopaths need to have professional indemnity insurance and follow a strict code of conduct.

Patients have the same safeguards as when currently they consult a doctor or dentist. At the Tarka Clinic, all practitioners are fully registered. Dr Peter Spencer, a medically qualified osteopath, oversees the medical aspects of treatment, ensuring that safety as well as effectiveness is paramount.

What your osteopath needs to know

To reach a full diagnosis, the osteopath needs to know a lot about your lifestyle, including the job.

Information will be sought regarding:

Diet, smoking and alcohol habits

Exercise and other recreational activities

Medication, prescribed or otherwise

Past illnesses, surgery and injuries

Social relationships at home

Specifically regarding your job, the osteopath will ask about such factors as:

Repetitive activities, such as frequent finger, hand or arm movements

Heavy lifting, bending and twisting

Work breaks

The set-up of individual workstations

Lighting conditions

Time spent on the telephone

The degree of control over work

Social relationships at work

Tarka Clinics Ltd

Tarka Clinics Ltd is probably the largest osteopathic practice in North Devon, and has been in existence in some form for the past 26 years. It has five osteopaths, one of whom is an experienced medical practitioner, and several other allied healthcare modalities, including homoeopathy, sports therapy, acupuncture, nutrition, aromatherapy, massage, chiropody and a fully equipped rehabilitation Pilates studio.

The practice specialises in musculoskeletal problems, and the practitioners liaise extensively both with each other and with local general medical practitioners and specialists.

For further details, telephone our clinic on 01271-373346, or visit our website at www.tarkaclinic.com

Osteopathy at Work

Most of us enjoy our work, but it is important to maintain correct posture, whether you lift heavy loads, sit at a computer for long periods, drive long distances, or even sit reading accounts. However, in even the best working environment there will be some people who suffer musculoskeletal pain. Osteopaths are skilled at discovering underlying causes of pain. Trained to have a thorough understanding of anatomy and physiology, they can use their hands to investigate and treat injuries to the ligaments, muscles and joints. An osteopath can advise on correct posture and movement, can help with the design of the working environment, and can give instruction on back care and preventative exercises.

At the Tarka Clinic, our specialist team can also help to identify and prevent potential problems before they arise, thus promoting a fitter workforce with improved morale and productivity and less absenteeism through ill-health. We can also advise on the purchase of office equipment designed to maximise comfort and correct posture.

What is Osteopathy?

Osteopathy is an established system of diagnosis and treatment that lays its main emphasis on the structural integrity of the body. Osteopaths recognise that much of the pain and disability we suffer stems from abnormalities in the function of the body structures as well as damage caused to it by disease.

Osteopaths at the Tarka Clinic use many diagnostic procedures used in conventional medical assessment and diagnosis.

Osteopathy's main strength, however, lies in the unique way that the patient is assessed from a mechanical, functional and postural standpoint and in the manual methods of treatment applied to treat the individual person.

We treat a wide range of patients and conditions. Half of our workload consists of patients with low back pain, and a further quarter with neck pain. Over half are women, many being working mothers juggling the stresses of home and work life. Pregnancy can put a strain on the whole spine, and osteopathy can help the body adapt to the changes it experiences.

A quarter of patients are in their forties, perhaps losing fitness and flexibility.

Osteopaths consider the whole person, and can help to alleviate current problems and prevent recurrences.

The types of injuries sustained at home or at work are changing, and the treatment modalities and management of these injuries are specialities of the Tarka Clinic practitioners.

The Tarka Clinic also offers a detailed preventative screening programme that concentrates on your real health needs. The assessment is carefully selected to give you the maximum information at the minimum cost. A separate leaflet gives further details on this valuable service.

Common Problems

Common problems in working people are disorders of the muscles, tendons and joints, particularly in the back, neck, hands and arms. Symptoms vary from mild aches to severe pain and disability. Conditions commonly treated by osteopaths include:

Low back pain
Neck and shoulder pain
Intervertebral disc lesions
Sciatica
Carpal tunnel syndrome
Tennis elbow
'Computer hump'
'Repetitive strain' injury
'Mouse wrist'

For the Employer

In recent years, an increasing number of companies have retained osteopaths as part of their company health team. Many smaller companies have also benefited from liaison with osteopaths. Having an osteopath directly involved in a staff care programme can lead to a fitter, more motivated workforce with greater productivity and less absenteeism. Staff from the Tarka Clinics are actively engaged in the provision of intervention programmes to local companies

For the Employee

Most osteopaths work from private practices. However, many GPs are working more closely with osteopaths, and practitioners at the Tarka Clinic are registered with all the major private medical insurance providers.

You do not need to consult your GP to visit an osteopath, although many GPs will suggest that you visit one for certain conditions.

Visiting the Tarka Clinic

When you visit an osteopath at the Tarka Clinic for the first time, a full case history will be taken and you will be given a full medical and osteopathic examination, including blood pressure, chest examination and reflexes. Be prepared to undress to your underwear for the examination.

During the osteopathic examination, you will be asked to perform a series of simple movements, either under your own power or against the practitioner's resistance. The practitioner then uses a highly developed sense of touch, to identify any points of weakness or excessive strain throughout the body.

It is necessary to perform a full examination because the whole body compensates for strain in one area, and disease can alter the whole picture and make it undesirable for the practitioner to employ certain techniques.

Occasionally, further investigations such as blood tests, x-rays or scans will be required.

These can be ordered privately, or you may be referred back to your General Practitioner. A full diagnosis is necessary to develop a treatment plan which is geared to the individual patient. Treatment may include muscle and connective tissue stretching, rhythmic joint movements (articulation) or high velocity thrust techniques to improve the movement of a joint.

Clinical ergonomics focuses on the fit between people and the demands of their environment.

The main concerns are: to assess people's ability to function, to reduce pain and dysfunction, and to identify barriers to recovery. The Tarka Clinic specialists can help to identify risk factors, detect early signs of dysfunction, intervene early to reduce risk factors, and effectively treat problems before they become severe.