

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.

Why Osteopathy in Pregnancy?

Osteopathic treatment through pregnancy is a wonderfully gentle way of helping the body adapt to the changes which are taking place. The safety of mother and baby is the osteopath's first concern.

Advice from your osteopath can help you to change your posture and learn to use your body correctly through pregnancy. Osteopaths can also help to ease other side effects of pregnancy such as heartburn, indigestion, constipation and pain in the buttock, groin or leg (commonly called sciatica). Some patients, too, report reduced morning sickness after osteopathic treatment.

Osteopathic treatment during pregnancy is not new. For many years, osteopaths have used their skills to help, employing a variety of gentle techniques to ease supporting muscles and ligaments.

Every pregnancy is 'special'. Osteopaths focus on the mother as a person and take account of her emotional state and other factors as well as her physical condition.

Treatment may be supplemented by exercises and other forms of self help which the osteopath may prescribe for the mother to do at home.

An osteopath can advise on positions in labour to help prevent back problems later. Pain relief techniques can also be shown to the mother and her partner or friend so that they can help during labour.

After delivery it is advised that mother and child return for structural examination, advice and check ups and, if necessary, for treatment.

OSTEOPATHY IN PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is a time when women are more aware of the workings of their body. It produces the largest postural change that a woman's body will undergo. For many years, osteopaths have used their skills to help relieve the aches and pains caused by weight and posture changes during and after pregnancy.

For many women pregnancy means having to cope with a whole range of symptoms from back pain to morning sickness. As the baby grows in the womb, its extra weight results in a changed centre of gravity and posture changes from week to week. This can lead to a variety of aches and pains. As breast weight increases, this also causes changes and pain may occur in the upper back and neck.

At the Tarka Clinic, one of the osteopaths specialises in the treatment of pregnant women and young babies and children.

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 'Tarkascreen' 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.

Useful tips

- Look after your back during pregnancy. Take particular care when lifting and carrying – especially lifting or carrying other children. Do not carry a small child on one arm for any length of time. Ask your osteopath for appropriate exercises.
- If you stand for any length of time, keep your bottom 'tucked in' to reduce strain on the lower part of your spine.
- When sitting, use a cushion for support and don't sit with your legs crossed. Avoid twisting movements. These may cause torsional strain within the pelvis.
- Lying on your side in bed, place a pillow under 'the bump' to provide support and also put a pillow between your knees to prevent back strain.
- If you prefer to lie on your back, place pillows beneath your knees to keep them bent.
- Make sure all equipment (changing tables, pushchair, pram etc.) is at a comfortable height for you.

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 and therapists using several allied healthcare modalities, including homoeopathy, sports therapy, nutritional therapy, aromatherapy, massage, chiropody and a fully equipped rehabilitation Pilates studio. An experienced medical practitioner who is also one of the osteopaths supervises the medical aspects of the therapies.

The practice specialises in musculoskeletal problems, and the practitioners liaise extensively both with each other and with local medical practitioners, ensuring patient safety as well as comfort and effectiveness.

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.

For further details, telephone our clinic on 01271-373346, or visit our website at

www.tarkaclinic.com