

## How can Osteopathy help?

The first thing to appreciate is that the causes of headache are often chronic and often been there along time.

They maybe the result of an old whiplash, habitual bad posture over the years at a desk, stress or just lack of exercise.

Being more chronic there are often more layers of compensation to work through but tissues often respond quicker to stretching exercises, along with treatment, to get the joints in the upper back and neck more mobile quickly and to a greater depth and reduce the pressure up under the skull.

Osteopathic treatment can ease the muscle pain and maintain joint mobility with manipulation, 'the clicks', or gently mobilizing the joints, soft tissue massage or stretch to the muscles or the very gentle cranial approach are all options depending on the type of problem and how long and deeply set it has been there.

It important to find and ease the cause of the problem and treatment will often end up right down in the lower back.

Exercises to maintain and improve the mobility in the spine will be useful, it is important to maintain the exercises once there is improvement to try and prevent re-occurrence. These are often more stretching and loosening type exercises , like Yoga or Pilates.

Heat is often helpful. Muscles like the warmth, heat eases the ache by flushing the blood through the muscles Either warm hot water bottles, wheat bags or heat patches can help. If you can't use heat, at least try not to let the muscles get cold!



Established in it's present location in Shaw, Newbury and in the Hungerford doctors surgery in the Croft since 1994.

The clinic has operated in the Newbury and Hungerford area since 1990.

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# Osteopathy

## Headache and sinus pain



Dr Andrew Taylor Still

Osteopathy was developed by an American doctor, Andrew Taylor Still in 1873. He noticed people with traditional medical complaints often presented with structural problems in their spinal joints. He developed mechanical 'techniques ' to manually treat these complaints and ease their symptoms rather than relying solely on traditional medicine. He believed a person's body, mind and spirit was connected and interacted as a unit. He believed the structure of the body governed its function and the function governed its structure and that each person has inherent healing potential through their immune system to heal themselves.

Osteopathy came to Britain in 1913, when one of Still's early students, John Martin Littlejohn, returned to London to practice and with the aim of setting up an Osteopathic school. The British School of Osteopathy opened in 1917 but Osteopathy did not become properly regulated until 1993 under the Osteopathy act and the formation of the General Osteopathic Council, its governing body.

## What is an Osteopath?

An Osteopath is often associated with treating bad backs and necks and associated with 'clicking joints'. Eighty percent of patients who first present at the clinic present with neck and low back problems often as a last resort, having exhausted the conventional medical approaches.

Patients often ask and are often surprised to find out Osteopaths can treat complaints in hips, knees, ankles and feet, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands and heads.

Osteopathy can be very gentle. 'Clicking joints' can be a useful tool when required and appropriate but there are many ways of easing restricted joints, ligaments, tendons and muscles and patients are often surprised how gentle and effective treatment can be and often how quickly some symptoms can improve.

The key to Osteopathic treatment is finding the cause! Bodies are very good at compensating around problems and imbalances, many restrictions can build up over a long time, from previous accidents, poor posture or habitual activity but the body bends and twists to compensate and carries on, moving as best it can, adapting to these restrictions until something finally finishes it off and it can't cope any more.

Osteopathic treatment eases these restrictions, restores the compensation and allows the body to do what it wants to do naturally and get itself better through its immune system. If you allow it an inch it will take a mile and get better on its own. Whether it requires easing joints with manipulation and 'clicks' at one end of the spectrum or a more gentle release to ease restriction with the subtle cranial sacral approach at the other extreme.

## Traditional complaints treated by Osteopaths

Headaches Consultants roughly estimated that 80% of headaches can be contributed to the neck. Most neck complaints are caused by tightness in the upper back. The upper back and neck should work together, if the upper back is tight, the neck compensates by moving a little more. The neck muscles tighten to protect the joints from straining and because they join up under the skull create tightness around the back of the head resulting in a tension headache. Often worse through the day and worse as the week goes on, associated with sitting at desks and increasingly with mobile phone use where the neck is bent looking down for long periods.

Migraine Multifactorial, with many different causes. The neck and spine can be a big factor in migraine. Osteopathic treatment, to lessen the influence of neck and back tightness on the head, can often result in less severe and less frequent migraines, often reducing symptoms to a more bearable headache which can be controlled with milder medication and allow more tolerance to other causative factors before a migraine is triggered.

Ear, nose and throat Tightness around the base of the skull can irritate nerves creating ear pain and dizziness. Tightness in neck and upper back can affect circulation and drainage which affects the lymphatic drainage which can be a factor in recurrent ear or throat infections like tonsillitis.

Sinus problems Similarly, a lot of sinus headache can be caused by restrictions in the neck and base of the skull. Tightness in the neck muscles and joints is more likely to affect lower pressure drainage from the head and face through the veins and lymphatic channels, rather than affect the higher pressure arterial blood supply into the head, which is deeper and more protected from interruption. This tightness leads to back pressure a bit like a dam and creates that tight band of pain often felt around the head. Osteopathic treatment can reduce this tightness quickly reducing the back pressure.

The sinuses are large air filled chambers in the forehead, between the eyes and behind the cheeks that act as a temperature regulator for the brain. If the sinuses become fluid filled and inflamed through infection, or allergies, pressure results in a sinus headache. Osteopathic treatment of the upper back and neck and gentle Cranial treatment through the base of the skull and on the bones around the face can often improve this sinus pain. Even with an allergic cause, treatment can allow this fluid to drain away, reducing recurrent infection, sinus headache pressure and often reducing the need for as much medication.

## Physiology

The human body fluxes between a fluid and jelly like state several times a minute. This is how nutrients, waste products and gasses are interchanged between the cells in the body, through our extracellular fluids to the blood stream. It is influenced by the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system which acts like a seesaw controlling the subconscious parts of our nervous system. If we are relaxed and sleeping we tend towards the parasympathetic nervous system and are more fluid in nature, if we are stressed and tense the seesaw tips towards the sympathetic nervous system and we tend towards a more jelly state.

A lot of nasal medication, mimics the sympathetic nervous system, our fluids become more jelly like, drying the natural moisture on the membranes in the nose and nasopharynx. So although medication may reduce your runny nose or congestion, the surface membranes in the nose still get inflamed by the allergen but can crack and bleed leading to nose bleeds. It is important to restore the normal layer of mucous on the membranes, we need to become more fluid.

That is where the antibodies live ready to react to pollens and other irritants breathed in through your nose. Yes, the allergen still creates an inflammation but normal mobility in the neck, base of the skull and face allows the fluid to drain more normally through the lymphatics rather than get stuck in the sinuses as a jelly where it offers the perfect breeding ground for infection. This is why people become reliant on hay fever medications and also often suffer with sinus type problems.

It is difficult to stop reliance on nasal medication and antibiotics and it can take months for the physiology to improve.