

Infants and Children

Osteopathic treatment can be invaluable in optimising the health of babies and children, as well as addressing a wide range of conditions. The more gentle, non-manipulative techniques that osteopaths employ, commonly known as cranial osteopathy', make osteopathy especially suitable for treating children, including newborn infants. Some of the conditions that occur in babies may persist, or become apparent in the young child.

It can be of benefit for your child to have an osteopathic assessment following a fall, especially where there has been a head injury or fall onto the spine/bottom. Children have an amazing ability to 'bounce back', however some trauma can be retained in the tissues and joints of the body, that may not be immediately apparent, but which can go on to cause problems later on in life. Your osteopath will be able to ascertain any restrictions that may have been caused, and treatment can alleviate and prevent further problems from occurring.

Common problems in young children that osteopathy can help with include:

'Glue ear' and recurrent ear infections which may lead to some hearing problems

- Asthma/allergies/recurrent chest infections
- Sinus problems
- Recurrent tonsillitis
- Learning and behavioural difficulties
- Some aspects of Delayed development (for instance in achieving milestones with speech and mobility)
- Headaches
- 'Growing pains'
- Bedwetting
- Postural problems, assisting in prevention of curvature of the spine/scoliosis

Early problems with eyesight and hearing are often associated with postural changes, as your child will adjust him/herself to be able to hear or see more clearly. If these changes in posture go unchecked, it is possible that they may go on to develop

chronic problems such as poor head and neck positions. This may lead to neck pain and head ache or perhaps further postural strain which may lead to curvature of the spine. Again, osteopaths can detect and alleviate such changes before they become habitual.

Keeping an eye on your child's posture and mobility is therefore very important. As they grow older, any postural problems become more difficult to fix. Once at school, children start to carry heavy bags, and sit at desks that may not necessarily be the right height for them. Ensure that your child uses a backpack, carried over both shoulders, as carrying it over one can be the start of future problems. Also, position it high enough on the back so the weight is distributed widely over their back, shoulders and pelvis and does not cause them to stoop to balance its weight. Encourage them not to carry any unnecessary book loads to and from school, which they are not actually going to work on that day.

The increased use of computer games and lying watching television in various positions can also place undue strain on your child's body, often going on to cause headaches, neck and upper back pain. Encouraging good postural habits early in life can save the long term injuries which may lead to chronic back problems in adulthood. Signs to look out for, which indicate an early problem with posture include asymmetry in the shoulders (one higher, or more forward than the other), excessive slouching, curvature of the spine, in or out turning of the feet. Have a look at your child's shoes – do they wear out quickly, or on one side more than the other? This can also point towards postural imbalance.

Teenagers can also suffer from musculoskeletal problems. Sporting injuries are common in this age group, as are other adolescent conditions such as Osgood-Schlatter's, Scheuermann's disease and other forms of osteochondritis. Osteopathy can be of great benefit in such conditions as well as with recurrent problems like ankle sprains.

An early structural assessment for your baby, child or teenager may be of great assistance in cases such as these in preventing serious long-term problems.