



OSTEOPATHY: Sports

Osteopathy is a natural approach to healthcare and an ideal treatment for most sports injuries.

Sports injuries treated by osteopaths

Whether you're an enthusiastic amateur or an elite professional, an osteopath can help with the prevention and treatment of common sporting injuries.

Pains and strains:

- low back pain (with or without sciatica).
- muscle and ligament injuries.
- knee pain (including lack of mobility and degenerative conditions).
- shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries.
- foot and ankle complaints.

Functional complaints:

- reduced joint flexibility (e.g. suffered by golfers who can't rotate as well as they used to).
- mechanical limitations (e.g. suffered by gymnasts having difficulty in doing full "splits").

Injuries caused by overuse:

- tennis and golfer's elbow.
- jumper's knee.
- tenosynovitis and tendonitis.

Recurrent injuries.

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.

Visiting an osteopath

On your first visit, and before examination begins, the osteopath will discuss and record your medical history in detail. 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.

How much does osteopathy cost?

You do not need a referral from a GP to see an osteopath. The majority of osteopaths work in private practice so you may choose to approach a practitioner directly and pay for treatment. Fees range from £25 to £50 and above for a single session, depending upon the location of the practice and experience of the osteopath. Typically between two and six treatment sessions are needed, though this varies according to the severity of the problem.

An increasing number of osteopaths work alongside GPs, so it may be possible for your doctor to refer you to an osteopath on the NHS. It may also be possible to claim for a course of osteopathy if you have private health insurance policy. Check with your insurance provider to confirm the available level of cover and to find out whether you require a referral from a GP or specialist. All insurance companies have help lines to explain your benefits and methods of claiming.

Osteopathy in action

A man in his late fifties, running at senior club level, had a calf injury in his right leg. After assessment by a variety of therapists he consulted an osteopath who discovered that the problem had been caused by a change of job two years previously. The man's new job required a lot of standing up, and examination revealed his tendency to stand with his right leg slightly bent. As a result the calf muscle had started to shorten on the right hand side. Osteopathic treatment helped him to stand with a straight posture, reducing the tension in the right calf. A stretching routine was then prescribed and recovery from the injury was quickly achieved.

A forty year old woman, playing badminton and tennis at county level, had been suffering from severe tennis elbow for six months. She was concerned that the worsening pain would force her to give up her sport. Her osteopath discovered that her spine allowed little rotation, and that her shoulder muscles were unusually tight. He treated her neck (from where the nerve supply to the elbow arises), and worked on her shoulder and upper back mobility. This approach reduced the demands on her elbow. Free of pain, and benefiting from greater mobility, she recovered from the injury and was able to play more powerful tennis and badminton shots than ever before.

A 16 year old footballer, representing his county several times at U18 level, complained of recurrent hamstring injuries and right-sided low back pain over the past two years. This was despite of rest, various treatments and specialists' opinions where because of unequal leg lengths a heel raise had been recommended, but more widespread symptoms had been created as a result. An osteopath's opinion was sought and was able to demonstrate that very unusually because of sport, a 'protective scoliosis' had already started to become semi-permanent. Thus the heel raise had forced additional stress which the spine was unable to compensate for. Treatment to enable the spine to re-align itself was carried out and a steadily increasing height of heel raise was gradually introduced. Exercises to maintain the developing flexibility helped to maintain the change. Resolution of the back problem also led (as anticipated) to a curtailment of recurrent hamstring injuries.

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**.

A healthy sporting life

If you're taking up a new sporting activity, you should seek the advice of a coach, trainer or instructor, and ask for an appropriate training programme for your age, experience and fitness.

With injuries, especially those to legs or arms, always remember the word **PRICED**:

Prevent injuries by preparing thoroughly. You should always warm up and stretch before exercise, and warm down and stretch afterwards.

Rest after injury, and give your body time to recover.

Ice should be placed on the injured area as quickly as possible.

Compress the injured area to prevent swelling. Strapping or taping should always be carried out by a qualified person.

Elevate the injured part of the body in order to encourage blood and oxygen to flow to the joints and tissues. This helps the body to heal itself.

Diagnosis should be obtained from a medical expert if you are concerned about the severity of an injury.

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

www.osteopathy.org.uk

Osteopaths specialising in the treatment of sports injuries have formed the Osteopathic Sports Care Association, which can be contacted on 0870 601 0037.

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: Work Strain

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