



Training and regulation

In the UK, the osteopathic profession is regulated by the General Osteopathic Council and by law, an osteopath must be registered with the Council to practise. To remain registered, they must comply with strict regulatory requirements and high standards of professional practice. They must also maintain regular professional development.

These requirements give patients the same sort of guarantees and protection as those given by doctors and dentists.

Osteopaths are trained to degree level attaining either a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or integrated Masters (MOst). Training takes a minimum of four years and includes a requirement to have over 1000 hours clinical experience with patients prior to registration.

Osteopaths are recognised by NHS England as Allied Health Professionals, playing a critical role in the diagnosis, treatment and care of people of all ages.

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We are members of the Institute of Osteopathy, the professional membership organisation for osteopaths, committed to the support and development of the osteopathic profession.

Membership of the Institute of Osteopathy affords assurances to the public, patients and colleagues, that we provide the highest quality service and care, exceeding the minimum requirements of professional regulation.

For more information on the Institute of Osteopathy, visit **www.iOsteopathy.org** or call **01582 488455**

Contact us, your local osteopath at:

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These leaflets have been produced by the Institute of Osteopathy to provide the public information on osteopathic care and treatment.

About Osteopathy

Osteopathy for health



A whole body approach to health

About osteopaths

Osteopathic practice is a safe and effective form of prevention, diagnosis and treatment for a wide range of health issues.

Osteopaths are highly trained healthcare professionals who are experts in the musculoskeletal system (joints, muscles and associated tissues) and its relationship to other systems of the body, to keep you as healthy as you can be.

Osteopaths see people of all ages from babies to the elderly and everyone in between, including pregnant women and elite athletes.

You do not need to consult your GP before you visit an osteopath, although you may wish to do so.

What to expect

Osteopaths are highly skilled professionals who are trained in diagnosing health issues, including those which may require further investigation.

When you first visit an osteopath you'll be asked about your current symptoms and medical history. All information will be treated as confidential in accordance with the standards of practice set out by the General Osteopathic Council and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), May 2018.

It is natural in most circumstances to worry about your symptoms and the cause. You can be confident that your osteopath will always complete a routine examination that checks for more serious diagnoses and will advise and discuss with you any further action that might be required.

After this examination, your osteopath will discuss your treatment options and you will then jointly decide an appropriate and suitable treatment plan, and the likely associated costs. This plan may involve several visits and, very occasionally, further tests and/or referrals to another appropriate health care professional.

Your treatment may begin at your first appointment. You may experience mild discomfort afterwards, but in most cases this will pass within 24 hours. If you have any concerns about your treatment you are encouraged to discuss them further with your osteopath.

If you wish, you are more than welcome to bring someone with you to your consultation.

The assessment

As part of your consultation your osteopath will examine the area(s) of your body causing discomfort and may undertake tests such as taking your blood pressure or testing your reflexes.

It may be necessary for your osteopath to ask you to remove some clothing, so that they can assess the areas of the body causing concern. If you are uncomfortable undressing to your underwear, you can bring with you clothing such as shorts, t-shirt or close fitting garments, that will enable them to work effectively without making you feel uncomfortable.

Your osteopath will feel for changes in your muscles and joints and examine these areas to identify problems. They may also assess your posture and the way you move. Sometimes the cause of the problem may be in a different area to the pain, so they may examine your whole body.

Dependant on your case, your osteopath may suggest that you seek further tests before your first treatment, for example blood tests or scans. They may also recommend that you consult your GP or another appropriate healthcare professional for onward care.

Your treatment

Osteopathic care is based on the individual needs of the patient and so varies depending on your age, fitness levels and diagnosis.

Osteopaths use a wide range of gentle hands-on techniques that focus on releasing tension, stretching muscles and mobilising joints. These are often used together with exercise and helpful advice designed to help you relieve or manage your pain, keep active and maintain the best of health.

Research has shown that manual therapy such as that used by osteopaths, can have beneficial effects, especially for back pain, helping you to return to ordinary movement and activity.

The health risks associated with having osteopathic treatment are extremely low. If you have any concerns about your treatment, we encourage you to raise them with your osteopath who will be happy to discuss them with you.

