

The Scourge of Back Pain

Lower back pain has reached epidemic proportions in the western world. It is the leading cause of disability in the UK and four out of five people will suffer back pain lasting more than a day at some point in their lives. As a result, doctors write prescriptions for millions of pain killers, which can have long term harmful effects on the body. Back pain responds well to osteopathic treatment – reducing pain and the reliance on pain killers, and improving mobility and quality of life.

The trouble with back pain is that it can do more than just give you a pain in the back. It can create difficulties with walking, sitting, bending and lifting and can even lead to depression and incontinence. It can also be the cause of pain in the buttocks, groin or legs (commonly called sciatica), in the head, neck, shoulders and arms. It can also be one of the effects of hip, knee and foot problems.

Back pain can result from bad posture, sitting for long periods, a sudden jerky movement, a lumpy mattress or poor lifting techniques. It can also be caused by injury in a work place, by a sports accident or by muscular spasms. It often occurs during pregnancy or, because of decreased flexibility, as people get older.

Our modern, sedentary lifestyles have a profound effect on the development of back pain; indeed one of the most effective ways of preventing it is simply to stay active. An average adult in the UK spends at least two hours a day in front of a computer screen or television set, and back problems can be triggered if they don't sit properly. In an age of mobile phones and computer games, such troubles are increasingly inflicting children of school age as well. An osteopath can advise on correct posture and movement and can give instruction on back care and preventative exercises.

There are also many diseases and pathological conditions that can lead to back pain. These include abdominal or pelvic disease, anxiety, arthritis, cervical or lumbar spondylosis, dermatological problems, kidney disease, rheumatic conditions, tumours and scoliosis. Registered osteopaths study anatomy, physiology, pathology, biomechanics and clinical methods during a four or five year honours degree programme. Such wide-ranging medical training provides them with the skills to diagnose conditions and to determine where osteopathic treatment is appropriate, and where the patient should be referred to a GP for further investigation.

Osteopathic healthcare is available from registered osteopaths Stephen Hudson and Caroline Sampson at:

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