

### **What is Cranial Osteopathy?**

Cranial osteopathy is a refined and gentle type of osteopathic treatment that encompasses the release of restriction and tension throughout the body, including the head.

It is a gentle and effective approach and may be used in a wide range of conditions for people of all ages, from birth to old age.

Osteopathy may have different specialities including paediatric, and cranial osteopathy (treating the internal organ of the body). Cranial osteopathy embraces all of these. It is a common belief that babies and children hold a natural reflex or strain in their bodies, because they are 'on edge'. The reality is different. Birth is one of the most stressful events of our lives. The baby is subjected to enormous force, as he is pushed out of the pelvis again, the natural resistance of the birth canal. The baby has to run and is a quick escape through the birth canal, on a hot and high temperature and possibly in a stressful environment.

The baby's head has the remarkable ability to absorb the energy in a normal delivery. In order to reduce the energy of the head, the bones overlap, bend and adapt to the baby's condition. The baby's chin is normally tucked down to reduce the energy of the head.

Many babies are born with odd shaped heads at birth. In the first few days, the head can gradually become more rounded, as the baby's skull, cranium and spine. However, this normalizing process is often incomplete, especially if the birth has been difficult. As a result, the baby may have a little discomfort or restriction in his head and body.

### **What problems can cranial osteopathy help with in babies?**

Some babies cope with the energy of the birth process and are contained and compressed, and are contained and happy. For others it is a different story, and they can display a range of problems. Cranial osteopathy may help with:

#### ***Crying, screaming, irritability***

The baby may be uncomfortable, with a constant feeling of pressure in the head. This may be made worse by the pressure on the head when lying down.

#### ***Feeding difficulties***

The baby takes a long time to feed and one feed merges into the next. The baby may be an 'indifferent' feeder. Feeding is difficult and involving due to mechanical restriction throughout the head, face and throat. The nerves of the tongue and face muscles may be irritated as they are pulled from the skull, which makes sucking difficult.

#### ***Sickness, colic and wind***

Regurgitation of milk between feeds, bouts of prolonged crying due to colic and wind. Often occurs in the evening. The nerves of the stomach may be irritated as they are pulled from the base of the skull, which can impair digestion. The diaphragm between the chest and the abdomen may be restricted or distorted, which further compromises both digestion and the ability of the stomach to relax and contract. Stress from a difficult or fearful birth can leave the digestive system in a constant state of tension. Stress from a difficult or fearful birth can leave the digestive system in a constant state of tension. An strain throughout the umbilical cord, for instance if it is around the baby's neck, can add to tension in the abdomen.

#### ***Sleep disturbances***

The baby sleeps for only short periods, and may sleep little in the day (or night!). The baby may be a 'light sleeper'.

The tension on the bones and membranes covering the skull keep the baby's nerves on a permanent alert state.

### **What problems can cranial osteopathy help with in older children?**

As the child grows, the effects of restricted movement can lead to other problems. The following are the most common, but by no means an exhaustive list.

#### ***Infections***

Restricted movement and birth restrictions may affect their whole body's response, and also deplete

he immune system. This leaves children more vulnerable to all types of infection.

### **Ear infection**

Recurrent ear infection, gradually becoming more frequent. May lead to 'glue ear' and some temporary loss of hearing.

Recurrent bacterial compression within and around the bone of the ear impedes fluid drainage from the ear through partial or complete blocking of the Eustachian tube. Infection may never fully clear, leaving a child vulnerable to the next infection and a depleted immune system.

### **Sinus and dental problems**

Periapical abscesses. Commonly blocked or runny nose.

Impaired growth and drainage of the sinuses and bone of the face due to recurrent molar compression. Later, this increases the chance of dental overcrowding.

### **Behavioural problems and learning difficulties, and special needs**

Poor concentration, conductive hearing, difficulty listening, hyperactivity.

Continuation of the relationship as a young baby. Recurrent molar compression makes them uncomfortable in one position for too long which becomes habit forming. Severe compression can modify normal patterns of learning in the brain. Severe bacterial rams may be a factor in cerebral palsy, and conditions such as Down's Syndrome may involve restriction within the head and body which can be helped through cranial osteopathic treatment. Please see our page on children with [learning difficulties and special needs](#).

### **Headache, aches and pains**

Headache begins age 7-8. Growing pains. Vulnerability to sprain, or other aches and pains. Recurrent molar compression may focus areas of pressure in the skull, at the bone joint of the skull forming a around the age of 7-8 years. Patterns of tension retained in other areas make the body more vulnerable to strain and fatigue.

### **Asthma**

Vulnerability to chest infection. Aggravation of all degrees of asthma from mild to severe. Recurrent molar compression can aggravate a tendency to asthma. Generalised reduced immunity leads to more chest infection. After infection, the chest remains tense and the rib does not return to full function, aggravating an asthmatic tendency. Osteopathic treatment releases the rib cage and helps improve chest function in a beneficial in reducing the frequency and severity of asthma attacks.

### **Cranial osteopathic treatment**

Osteopathic treatment using the cranial approach is gentle, safe and effective for babies and children. Very specific, skilled, light pressure is applied here necessary to maintain the natural ability of the body to release tension and infection.

### **Could there be any adverse reactions?**

Reactions to treatment are variable, often the baby or child is relaxed after and sleeps well. Other have a burst of energy after treatment, all followed by a good night's sleep.

Occasionally children are unsettled after treatment. This is a temporary irritation, and all clear within 24-48 hours.

By The Sutherland Society