

## Osteopathic treatment

Osteopaths recommend that all babies benefit from a routine check up after birth. Osteopathy can help to release uncomfortable stresses and distortions in the baby after birth, allowing the baby to relax and become much happier and more settled. Early treatment also aims to prevent as far as possible the problems that may arise later as a direct result of the birth strains. Most children also benefit from occasional treatment throughout childhood, to pick up any developing problems early and hence minimise their effect.

Osteopathy treatment using the cranial approach is very gentle, safe and effective in the treatment of babies and children. Specific gentle pressure is applied where necessary to enable the inherent healing ability of the body to effect the release of stresses.

### Could there be any adverse reactions?

Reactions to treatment are variable. Often the baby or child is very relaxed afterwards and sleeps well. Others have a burst of energy after treatment, usually followed by a good nights sleep.

Ocasionally children are unsettled after treatment. This is temporary, and is usually caused when the release of the retained moulding has been incomplete. It is not always possible for all the retained moulding compression to be released in one session, especially if it has been severe.

## When to treat

Treatment to be beneficial at any age, but the younger the better. It is never too early to treat. Treatment is aimed at relieving the presenting symptoms as well as trying to prevent the ongoing problems that can arise as a result of unresolved birth trauma.

## What can osteopaths treat?

- Crying babies
- Feeding difficulties
- Sickness, colic and wind
- Sleep disturbances
- Infections
  - Ear, chest, throat, low immunity
- Asthma
- Sinus problems and mouth breathers
- Behaviour problems
- Development delay
- Learning difficulties
- Aches and pains
  - Back, neck, growing pains, headaches
- Cerebral palsy and other types of brain damage
  - ... and more

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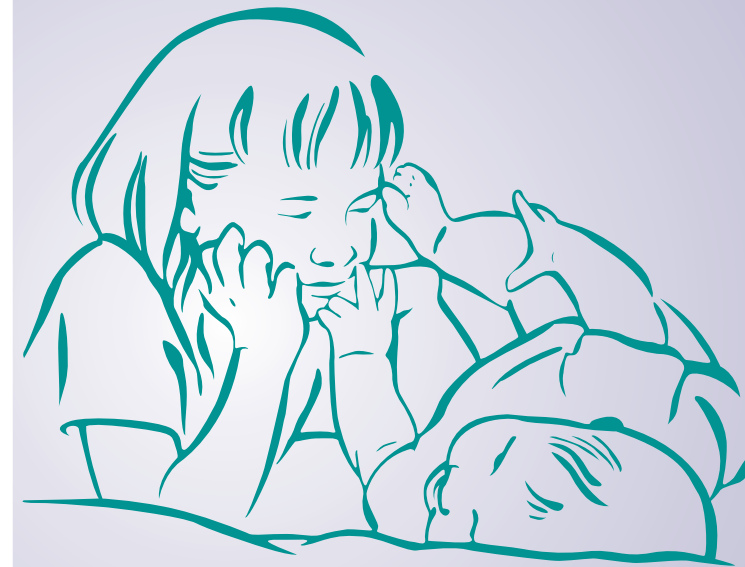
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# Osteopathy for children



## The birth process

It is a common belief that babies and children should have no structural strains in their bodies, because they are young and supple. The reality is very different.

During birth, the baby is subjected to enormous forces. He/she has to twist and turn to squeeze through the bony pelvis, on this short but highly stimulating and potentially stressful journey. To help the head pass through the narrow pelvis, the soft bones of the skull bend and overlap to reduce its relative size. This is called moulding, and is why many babies are born with odd shaped heads.

In the first few days after birth, the head gradually loses much of the extreme moulding shape, aided by suckling, crying and yawning. But this unmoulding process is often incomplete, especially if the birth has been difficult, and can leave the baby with uncomfortable stresses in his head and /or body. These may cause a variety of problems, both in the young baby and later on as the child grows.

## Common problems in babies

Some babies cope extremely well with even quite severe retained moulding compression, and are happy and healthy. Others may suffer a variety of problems that can be directly attributed to the effects of birth.

**Crying, irritable or unsettled baby.** Needs to be rocked to sleep. Prefers being carried.

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

**Feeding difficulties.** The baby may take a long time to feed and one feed merges into the next. He or she may be a 'windy' feeder.

**Feeding is difficult and tiring for the baby due to mechanical stresses through the head, face and throat. The nerves to the tongue may be irritated as they exit 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 worse in the evening.

**The digestive system in the baby can be irritated for a number of reasons, often due to mechanical distortion of the head and body as a result of the birth. This can make the baby uncomfortable and aggravate the already vulnerable digestive system.**

**Sleep disturbances.** The baby sleeps only for short periods, and may sleep little in the day (or night!). Wakes to the slightest noise.

**The tension in the bony and membranous casing of the skull keeps the baby in a persistently alert state.**

## As the child grows

As the child grows, the effect of retained moulding can lead to other problems. The following are some of the most common, but it is by no means an exhaustive list.

**Behavioural and sleep problems.** Continuation of the restlessness as a young baby leading to poor sleep habit. Difficult behaviour: angry, awkward or oversensitive child.

**Low level discomfort due to physical tension and strain in various areas of the body. May be caused by retained birth compression but often aggravated by accidents, falls and infections.**

**Learning difficulties.** Hyperactivity, fidgeting, difficulty sitting still. Poor concentration made worse by lack of sleep. Butterfly type of child who flits from one activity to the next.

**Physical discomfort makes the child dislike staying in one position for too long and concentration difficult. This becomes habit forming and can interfere with learning.**

**Infections.** Physical or emotions stress of any sort, including from birth, can deplete the immune system. This makes it more difficult for the body to fight and recover from infection.

**Ear Infections.** Gradually become more frequent. Loss of hearing, leads to 'glue ear'.

**Distortion and compression in the base of the skull, particularly in the bones around the ear can cause narrowing of the sinuses and Eustachian tube that drains the ear. This impedes mucous drainage from the ears and leaves them vulnerable to repeated infection.**

**Sinus and dental problems.** Constantly blocked or runny nose. Persistent mouth breather. Increased chance of dental overcrowding.

**Impaired growth and drainage of the sinuses and bones of the face due to retained moulding compression.**

**Chest infections and asthma.** Vulnerability to chest infections. Aggravation of asthma.

**If the birth has been difficult, and commonly after a caesarean birth, the baby may not fully expand the lungs with the first breathing efforts. This can lead to long-term under use of the lungs, and the child more vulnerable to chest infections and asthma. After an infection the chest may remain congested and the ribs tense, making further chest infections more likely or aggravating a tendency to asthma. Osteopathic treatment to improve chest function is often beneficial in reducing the frequency and severity of chest infections and asthma attacks.**

**Developing posture, aches and pains. Growing pains.**

Children complaining of aches and pains anywhere in the body should be taken seriously and checked by an osteopath.

**Strain or asymmetry in the head, spine or pelvis may affect the developing posture and contribute to spinal or joint problems later on. Osteopaths assess and treat the developing spine to help the development of a well balanced posture.**

**Headaches.** Usually begin age 7-8.

**The bony joints of the skull fully form at around the age of 7-8 years. After this time any distortion or compression remaining from the birth cannot be accommodated so easily, leading to headaches.**