

The Importance Of A Healthy Spine And How Regular Osteopathy Treatments Can Help You Live A Happy, Pain-Free Life

01444 410944, 2 Clair Road, Haywards Heath



If you were to be asked what part of your body was the most important you might say your heart as it pumps your blood, your liver as it clears you of toxins, or your bowel as it contains most of your immune system and breaks nutrients down to keep you alive. You probably wouldn't think of your spine, would you? But what is amazing about your spine is that it supplies all of your organs - every single one - with a nerve that controls how it functions. Let me put that another way, if your spine is NOT functioning well it can alter how you feel and function on a day-to-day basis. In fact, in Osteopathy we have a saying: "Structure Governs Function". So your structure - your spine, your joints, your muscles, your ligaments etc. - rule how you function.

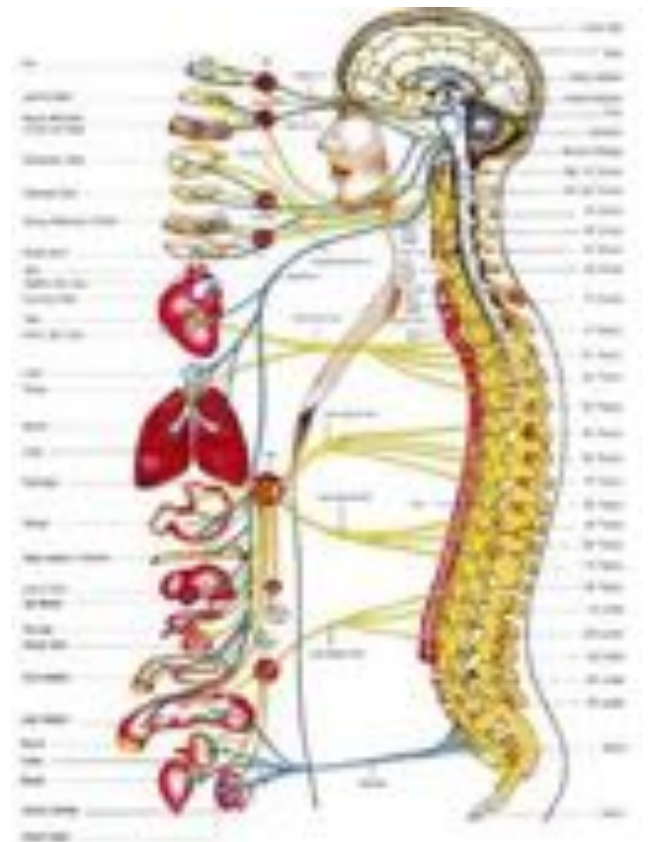
YOUR SPINE HEALTH AFFECTS YOUR DAILY HEALTH

Have a look at this picture; it shows all the nerves that come out of the spine and the organs they supply. Let's look at a couple of examples of this in action. Most people have heard of Sciatica; this is the pain down the back of your leg when a nerve in your low back is irritated. Other branches from that same nerve actually supply your internal organs too, like your small intestines, large intestine, ovaries, etc. The difference is you know about the Sciatica because it's painful! Another common example is that of a stomach ulcer, that gives burning pain between your shoulder blades. That burning is the nerve from the stomach feeding pain back to the spine. This is the interesting bit though: you can treat the spine to help the stomach or other organs just like you treat it to help Sciatica!

What Are Subluxations?

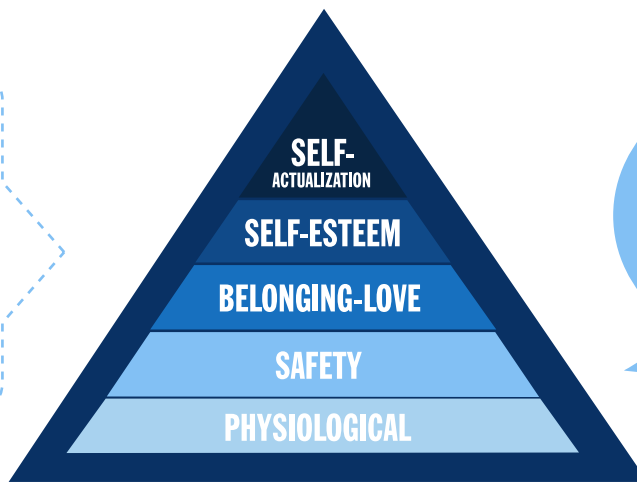
Subluxations or restrictions are what an Osteopath feels for in your spine to determine how well you are functioning. We also feel for tight muscles, strained or inflamed ligaments and tendons, and how well joints are moving too amongst many other things. But it's these restrictions or subluxations that we free off in a treatment to help you feel better, have less pain, less stiffness and as I have explained can actually help your whole body health too.

Most patients first visit us because these subluxations have caused them pain and they want to be out of it now! However, these subluxations don't have to cause you pain, in fact you may feel fine and we could examine your back and still find them. But you don't have to feel pain to have decreased function or performance. Your body is clever at compensating for these problems; it is also clever at giving you warning signs that something is on the verge of going wrong. And most of us ignore these signs until it is too late!



YOUR HEALTH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU HAVE!

This pyramid is called "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs". It shows that your health really is the most important thing in your life and if you don't have it you can't enjoy many of the other important things in life, even very basic self-needs, like safety and being in love! Health is the base of the pyramid, or 'physiological'.



After all, if you are in pain or unwell you aren't usually brimming with loving thoughts!

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

POOR POSTURE

Q

Can you guess what the number one CAUSE of back and neck pain is that we see as Osteopaths?

A

Poor posture!

It's not dramatic injuries.

It's consistent, daily poor posture and having a sedentary lifestyle, like sitting at a desk all day. Let me tell you how important your posture is. The average head weighs 10-12 pounds and recent research has found that when we text on a phone and lean forward, the forces exerted on our neck and spine reaches 60 pounds!

That's the average weight of an 8 year old! But texting isn't the whole story; all of us walk around, sit, drive and work at computers with a constant poor posture. For many years now it has been documented that for every inch your neck moves forward it adds an extra 10 lbs. to the weight of your head! And your neck and back muscles take this strain, producing chronic pain.



Scoliosis

A poor posture isn't just slumping forward, the spine can go side to side too, and this is called a Scoliosis. One researcher did an experiment looking at the very top vertebrae of our neck, called the atlas. He found that if the vertebrae had shifted left or right then there was over a 90% chance that the person's whole weight had shifted that way too! And that was only one vertebrae of your spine gone wrong.

Can you imagine then the changes that go through your low back, hip, knee, ankle and foot that can cause pain in these joints too?

Osteopaths treat the spine and its associated muscles with this in mind and help the curves gently balance to calm the nerves to organs, muscles, joints, arteries, veins, ligaments, tendons, skin... you name it, it has a nerve supply to some degree that comes from your spine.

OSTEOPATHY TREATMENT FOR HEALTH AND PAIN PREVENTION

Many patients use Osteopathy as a preventative measure to avoid low back pain. If you've had low back pain before then you will know it is a big motivator to not have it again!

Time after time we hear the same story from patients. They come in for treatment when they are in pain, get fixed and don't come back until the next painful and debilitating episode.

And they say, ***"I wish I had come back earlier!"***

The reality of back pain is that it can really get you off track with your daily living. Being in pain is stressful! It can make you snappy and grumpy and generally fed up! Your health really is linked to your daily happiness.

At The Perrymount we have many patients come to see us very regularly to prevent this occurrence happening because they have experienced pain that they never want to feel again. Or perhaps they can't afford to have more time off work, or are rushing around after children, or want to garden, play golf or are professional sports players after a personal best! Everyone has their own reasons.



Here is something we always hear, ***"This regular Osteopathy treatment is really working; I haven't had a bad issue since having regular treatments with you."***

Regular Osteopathy treatments are preventative of acute back pain episodes and if the occasional niggle crops up here and there we are on top of them really quickly and your spine recovers more easily and more quickly with less pain, family disruption or time off work.

There is science to back this up too, if you like the science angle. It has been researched that having spinal treatment while NOT in pain, beneficially corrects the nerves and muscles in the spine and RESETS them when they are incorrectly firing which could cause an issue potentially in the future. It's like running a "clean up" programme on the hard-drive of your computer or having your car serviced before it breaks down. And this is what is behind most pain - a long-term muscle tension that causes you to alter your posture or change the way you move.



At The Perrymount our Osteopaths love getting people out of pain but we love it just as much when a patient comes to us and we ask, "How are you?" and they reply, "I'm fantastic, no problems at all!"

YES >

We have done our job to the best of our ability and we have educated them too. They have even come to see us for treatment even though they aren't in pain. We can now treat their back and make it **EVEN HEALTHIER!** This means they are getting further and further away from the point of pain happening again. It also means their spinal and overall health will be improving.

It's a pleasure to treat a healthy back and make it even healthier.

You see, the main aim of treating a spine in pain is to stop the pain as quickly as possible; at this point it isn't entirely about improving future health, but in an ideal world that's what we want it to be about.

It is so much more important and beneficial to treat a spine into better health than just out of pain. The reason being that once pain has gone the problem that got you there in the first place might not be fixed yet.

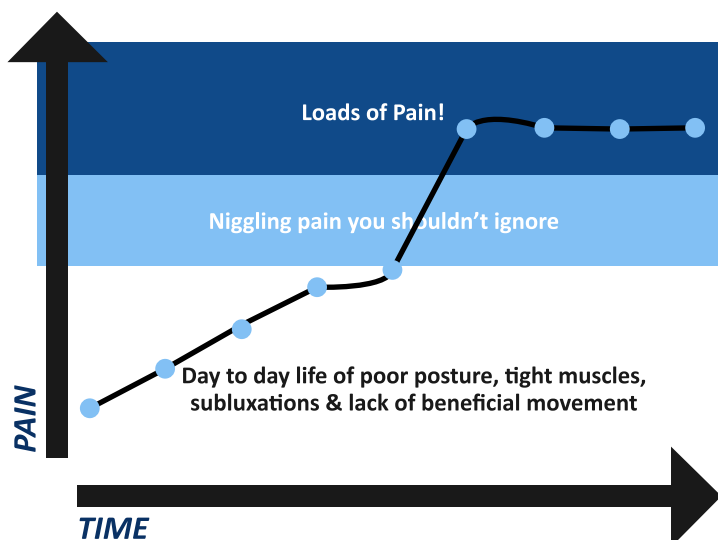
WHAT IS THE THING EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT ICEBERGS?

That there is more under the water than above it. And this is like back pain too. When an Osteopath treats pain they are treating the tip of the iceberg. The maintenance and future appointments when you visit **WITHOUT** pain give us the opportunity to treat all the other issues below the surface.

This means you can turn your neck better when driving the car, bend more easily when gardening, sit at your work desk without aching, lift your children without low back pain, have an easier golf swing or improved running or sports performance.



HOW DOES A SPINE GET IN PAIN?



Have a look at the diagram to the left, it shows how 90% of people get in pain with their back. The dark blue area is acute pain and below that in light blue is where you get some niggling warning signs. The white area is no pain.

The line illustrates how dysfunctional your back is getting through day-to-day life. By dysfunction I mean poor posture, lack of movement, tight muscles and subluxations or restrictions.

The most important part of the dysfunction line is where it rapidly jumps from the light blue area into the dark blue area. This is where a "niggle" skyrockets into acute pain. It is also the "last straw" or the "straw that breaks the camel's back" because the movement that typically creates this big jump into loads of pain is something ridiculously simple like bending to pick up a pencil, lifting a cup of tea, or making the bed.

So why does something so small create agonising back pain? Well that is answered by what is happening in the white zone, where you aren't suffering pain but your back is gradually picking up micro-injuries that you can't feel. In this pain-free area you need to be looking after yourself. Having a good posture, sitting at work well, taking on board good food and water nutrition and having regular Osteopathic treatment to keep your spine healthy keeps you in this pain free zone.

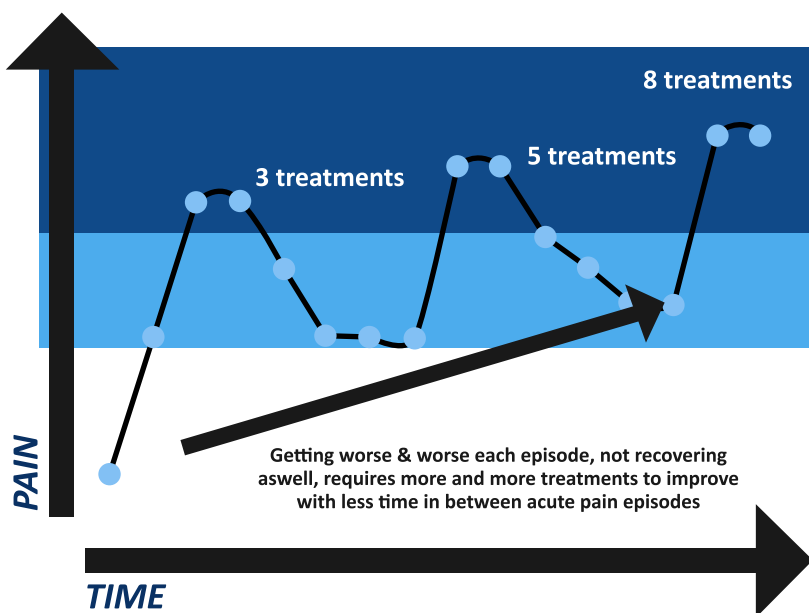
It is important to remember that a spine that is getting into problems doesn't have to be painful. YET!

Other beneficial activities in this area to prevent going into the light blue and then dark blue zone includes Pilates, yoga, Tai Chi, back care classes, Dynamic Movement Stability classes, etc. Talk to one of our Osteopaths to help you choose the correct exercise to give you the most benefits.

What happens to my back when I only get treatment when I'm in pain?

Now have a look at the next diagram. This is how most patients start out with treatment, which is fine - it's the natural way to start. It illustrates how treatment helps you get better, then the issues build into pain again, which get fixed again with treatment, then builds again and gets fixed again, and on and on. But note how each episode takes more treatments to get better as it gets a little bit worse each time and usually there will be less time in between each pain episode too.

At each stage the Osteopathy really helps and the pain goes but it doesn't really give the spine the chance to get even better. The treatment is just re-setting the spine back to how it was just before the injury or pain occurred. On top of this lots of compensation mechanisms occur in the spine, for example a new acute neck pain might actually be due to a long-term, old low back injury. Or very commonly a knee pain is actually due to a long-term, chronic low back or pelvis problem that hasn't been fixed.



Just having treatment to get out of pain is the tip of the iceberg as I have mentioned. The follow up treatments allow the Osteopath to look at the other CAUSES and compensations that are behind the actual painful injury site.

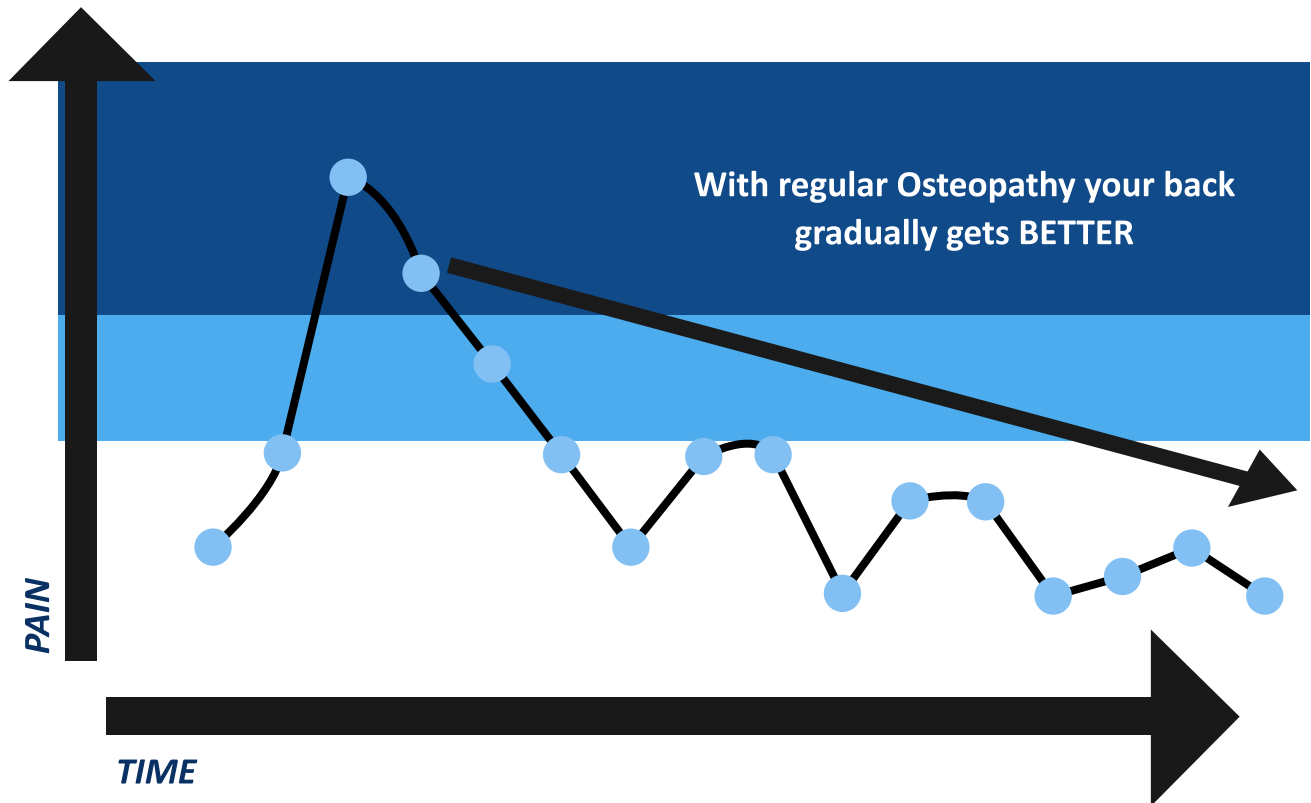
How do I PREVENT getting in pain with Osteopathic treatment?

This is the ultimate goal; to not even have the pain occur, or at the very least if niggles crop up they are easier to get better, improve faster and cause less pain and disruption to daily family and work life.

To do this you must pro-actively look after your spine. Day to day life takes it's toll by tightening muscles, stretching ligaments and causing spinal restrictions and subluxations. These can be "ironed-out" by having regular Osteopathic treatments. Other activities like Pilates or back care classes will also help, although these are not be able to focus specifically on tight, restricted areas or subluxations like an Osteopath will be able to.

The next diagram shows correct preventative and maintenance Osteopathic treatment. Your spine may go up and down and get into the light blue "niggle" area but the frequency of the treatment is such that it resets you back to being better again and you never reach the dark blue area of acute agonising pain.

If the timing is really spaced out for you and you also make other beneficial lifestyle changes then there is no reason why your back shouldn't get BETTER & BETTER with less and less chance that injuries and pain will occur in the future.



How often should I come for pain prevention Osteopathic treatments?

Frequency of healthy spine treatments depends on your lifestyle and job etc. If you are a heavy labourer or work at a computer all day, then you will need more regular treatments, whereas if you have some healthy movement in your life you may maintain a healthy spine with fewer treatments.

Our Osteopaths will give you their professional and honest advice for the best of your health. Only in the most acute conditions do Osteopaths see patients twice per week and the aim is to get you out of pain as quickly as possible with the minimum number of treatments. Finding the correct prevention and maintenance frequency is an open conversation between your Osteopath and you to find where you are happy.

We offer prevention & maintenance packages that are at a reduced price as a thank you for trusting us to look after you.