

OSTEOPATHY: WHAT IS IT EXACTLY?

Osteopathy is a form of evaluation and treatment that aims to correct dysfunctions that may affect the proper function of the human body. We look for lack of mobility (that is, dysfunction) in the skeletal system, as well as the cranium, the visceral organs, and soft tissues/muscle and the fascia. We then proceed to make links between these affected structures and the symptoms that the patient presents with. Evaluation will allow us to determine which systems are most problematic and establish our treatment plan.

Briefly, we look for the nature of the pain, that is, its origin. Sometimes an old injury or trauma may be at the source of a relatively new pain. For example, an abdominal surgery may cause adhesions or scar tissue which can contribute to tension in the back.

In general, we see clients that complain of:

- neck pain
- back pain
- headaches/migraines
- difficulty with digestion (that is, a complaint that has been investigated by a doctor but for whom there are no positive tests to explain the symptoms)
- menstrual cramps
- chronic joint pain

An osteopath already has basic knowledge in the field of health sciences and is often a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, doctor, nurse or physical education teacher. He/she studies part-time for an additional 6 years and must pass exams each year in order to obtain his/her diploma. It is a specialization that advocates a global approach to the client and is becoming more recognized in the field of health in Québec.

The fundamental principles of treatment are:

- 1. The importance of circulation:** good arterial, venous and lymphatic circulation and good function of the nervous system help to assure vitality.
- 2. The inter-relation between structure and function:** according to A.T. Still, founder of osteopathy, 'Dysfunction or the start of an illness is the result of a change in the anatomy, leading to a perturbation of the physiology.'
- 3. The functional unity of the organism:** every part affects the whole.
- 4. The healthy organism is endowed with self-regulation, self-healing and the maintenance of good health.**