



Osteopathy for Babies

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Why would a baby need an Osteopath? This is a common question when speaking to parents. The first thing to understand is that an Osteopath does not only treat spinal pain. They treat the whole body and can therefore contribute to treating a wide range of conditions such as migraine, asthma, and irritable bowel. Therefore an Osteopath would not be seeing a baby because it necessarily had something wrong with its spine but for conditions like colic, restless sleep, and feeding difficulties.

So how does the Osteopath treat conditions like these? They are trained to pick up dysfunctions within the body. They know what healthy tissue feels like and therefore can know when something feels unhealthy or dysfunctional. Unhealthy here does not mean pathological or diseased but under functioning and not at optimum health. They pick these dysfunctions up with their hands, a light and gentle touch which doesn't involve moving the baby around at all. In fact some babies sleep through a treatment. This technique is gentle enough to use on the youngest babies, only a few days or weeks old.

Babies are obviously designed for birth and their bodies adapt very well to it, as any parent who has seen the speed at which their baby's head returns to a normal shape after birth, can tell you. However the baby's body is subject to many stresses and strains and huge forces during the birth process

which can sometimes leave tensions and irritations through the skull and body which can contribute to restless babies, colic, feeding problems, excessive crying etc.

If the labour has been particularly long or very short, they often find quite a lot of tension at the top of the babies neck which can then directly aggravate the nerve to the gut, contributing to colic. Another common finding in the colicky baby is tension around the umbilicus from when the cord is cut, or from physical pulling if the cord was round the baby's neck.

Forceps and ventouse interventions can leave specific strain patterns through the skull and body, as can the position in which the baby was born ie. anterior, posterior, or breech.

Babies born by caesarean, either planned or emergency, can also benefit from treatment. The emergency caesarean is often preceded by a fairly lengthy labour with the baby getting stuck or going into distress, or both. The baby can therefore be quite low in the pelvis and has to be pulled the other way to be born, sometimes with forceps. This can be quite a shocking experience for the baby and if the baby was stuck previously this could leave strains in the skull. A planned caesarean can be more shocking as there is no gradual build up and

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