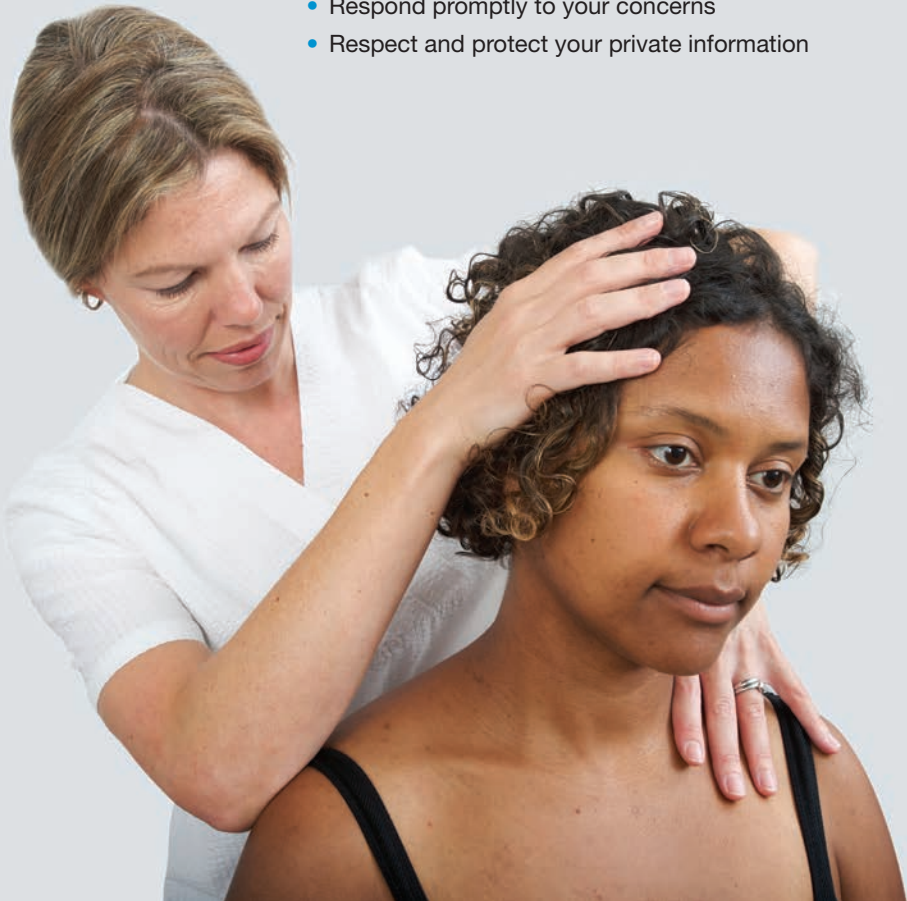




What to expect from your osteopath

Patients consulting an osteopath are entitled to a high standard of care. As a patient, you should expect your osteopath to:

- Make your care their priority
- Treat you with dignity and respect
- Involve you in decisions about your care
- Respond promptly to your concerns
- Respect and protect your private information





VISITING AN OSTEOPATH

You have decided to visit an osteopath. Before your first appointment:

- Check that the osteopath is registered with the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), the regulatory body for osteopathy. You can do this by checking the Register on our website, www.osteopathy.org.uk, which lists osteopaths by name and location, or call us on 020 7357 6655.
- Osteopathic practices should be able to provide information about the osteopath, their clinic, what the treatment involves, payment methods, fees and anything you need to know before your first visit.

LISTENING AND EXAMINING

Osteopathy is a patient-centred system of healthcare. A first appointment generally lasts longer than subsequent appointments, to allow the osteopath adequate time to:

- Listen and ask questions about your problem, your general health, other medical care you are receiving or medication you are taking, and record this in your case notes. The information you provide will be confidential.
- Examine you properly. It is likely the osteopath will ask you to remove some of your clothing. Tell your osteopath if you are uncomfortable about this. You should expect privacy to undress, and a gown or towel may be provided. You can ask a friend or relative to accompany you during your treatment.
- Ask you to make simple movements and stretches, to observe your posture and mobility. Because of the body's structure, pain or stiffness you are experiencing in one area may be linked to a problem elsewhere.
- Examine the health of the joints, tissues and ligaments using their hands and a highly developed sense of touch called palpation.
- Check for signs of other serious conditions they cannot treat and advise you to see your GP or go to hospital. They should provide you with a letter explaining what they believe to be the problem.



DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Osteopathy specialises in the diagnosis, management, treatment and prevention of musculoskeletal and other related disorders.

- Your osteopath will give you a clear explanation of what they found (their diagnosis), and discuss a treatment plan that is suitable for you, which may include lifestyle changes. They will explain the benefits and any risks of the treatment they are recommending.
- It is important to understand and agree what the treatment can achieve, and the likely number of sessions needed for a noticeable improvement in your wellbeing.
- Treatment is hands-on and involves skilled manipulation of the spine and joints, and massage of soft tissues. Your osteopath will explain what they are doing and will always ask your permission to treat you (known as consent). Ask questions at any time, if you are unsure of what you have been told or if you have any concerns.
- Self-help measures and advice on exercise may be offered to assist your recovery, and prevent recurrence or worsening of symptoms.

ONGOING CARE

Due to the physical nature of the treatment, it is not unusual to sometimes feel sore or stiff in the first 24–48 hours after treatment. Your osteopath will explain any likely reactions that you could expect. If you have any concerns, it is important to contact the osteopath and ask their advice.

It may require more than one visit before your problem is resolved. The osteopath will review your progress at each subsequent visit and seek your consent to any changes to your treatment plan.

KEEPING YOUR GP INFORMED

Most patients refer themselves directly to an osteopath. Although referral by a GP is not necessary, you are encouraged to keep your GP fully informed, so that your medical records are up to date. This will ensure you receive the best possible care from both health professionals. With your permission, your osteopath may send a report to your GP, with details of your condition and treatment. You can also request a letter for your employer, if this is helpful.

ADDRESSING CONCERNS

All osteopathic practices have a complaints procedure. If you have concerns about your osteopath, it is usually helpful to raise these with the person involved, or their employer if they have one, to see if the matter can be put right.

If you have been unable to resolve the issue or if it is so serious that it might affect the osteopath's ability to practise safely, you should speak to the General Osteopathic Council. We will advise on the next steps to take under our formal complaints process. In serious cases, we can restrict the way an osteopath practises, or even remove their right to practise.



General
Osteopathic
Council

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Tel: 020 7357 6655 • Email: info@osteopathy.org.uk • www.osteopathy.org.uk

ENSURING HIGH QUALITY CARE

It is illegal to describe oneself as an osteopath without General Osteopathic Council registration. Registration means the osteopath is:

- Properly trained and qualified
- Of good character and fit to practise
- Covered by professional indemnity insurance
- Keeping their knowledge and skills up to date.

If an osteopath's practice or conduct falls short of these required standards, the General Osteopathic Council will take steps to resolve the matter or can stop them from practising by removing them from our Register.

Osteopaths practise to high standards and you can learn more about these in the *Osteopathic Practice Standards* (General Osteopathic Council, 2012).

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of osteopathic care, please contact the General Osteopathic Council at the address above.



www.osteopathy.org.uk

Scan for instant access
to the GOsC website