



Hands On

Wadsworth Osteopaths ■ Newsletter ■ February 2015

This month's theme is Low Back Pain.



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'My back's killing me'

Back pain can be really frightening. The pain can be so severe: 'worse than childbirth', 'the worst pain I have ever experienced'.

People who suffer with acute, severe back pain understandably think that there is something going dreadfully wrong with their body. Especially if it is the first time they have experienced severe back pain.

At Wadsworth Osteopaths we see these patients on a regular basis and, in fact, the majority of patients with the most severe pain do not have the most severe injuries and 90% will be largely free of pain within a week or 2 if managed and treated appropriately.

Q. So what is happening when my back is so painful that I can hardly move, getting out of bed, getting dressed and everyday activities like sitting, driving and walking become virtually impossible?

A. Most cases of severe back pain are caused by damage to the soft tissues ie

muscles and ligaments.

Sometimes the cause of the back pain is a forceful movement causing injury - falling from a horse, lifting something heavy, carrying something heavy.

Sometimes the back pain is caused by a seemingly trivial movement or activity – reaching to pick up a pen, tying shoe laces, coughing, sneezing, getting up from a chair, getting out of bed. In these types of presentations there seems to be no justification for the pain coming on but we find when we examine these patients that there are signs of a twisting movement having caused the strain. The lumbar spine is most vulnerable to strain and weakest when we bend forwards with a twist. We can do this movement 100s of times without problems but on odd occasions we catch ourselves in the wrong position and muscles and ligaments can be strained.

Q. Why is the pain so severe?

A. The pain is usually caused by *muscular contraction*. When our body senses an injury the natural reaction is to protect the damaged area. The muscles around the area of injury tense up and the muscular tension causes pain, the pain makes the muscles tense up further and this increases the pain. This *vicious cycle* of increasing tension and pain creates extreme pain.

Inflammation also causes pain – sometimes extreme pain. Inflammation happens when body tissues are damaged, increased blood flow to the area affected causes swelling to immobilise the injured area and provides large quantities of blood cells to repair the tissue damage. This is helpful but the inflammation, like the muscle spasm, can get out of hand and create increasing pain.

Q. What can I do if my back 'goes' in a big way?

A. In times gone by doctors used to advise bed rest for a week or 2. As osteopaths we have always tended to encourage movement and now there is good evidence to suggest that long periods of bed rest are more harmful than helpful.

Bed rest for 2-3 days may be advised for the most severe cases but longer than that and 3 adverse affects may kick in – muscles become weak from lack of use, we become stiff through lack of movement and psychologically it can be very demoralising to be in bed for a prolonged period of time.

Heat can help to relieve the pain of excessive muscle contraction, *cold packs* can help to reduce the inflammation. *Alternate hot and cold* can also help. There is often confusion in relation to heat and cold (which do I use and when?) We will make an assessment when we see a patient for the first time and depending on where and how much muscle spasm and or inflammation is present, we will advise what to use and where to apply it.

Medication. Pain killers and anti-inflammatory drugs can help to ease the pain. Pharmacists will advise what is available over the chemist's counter. If you think you will need stronger medication you may need to contact your GP. From experience we find sometimes that the most severe pain will not respond to even quite powerful medication.

Take advice. If you find the usual self help methods are not working for you, you can speak to your GP. Some patients will go to A&E. For the patients who contact us we will advise over the phone. If you are able to get in to the surgery we will go through a detailed case history and examination in order to work out what has been damaged in your case.

Treatment. If treatment is appropriate we will explain what we aim to do to help. Most osteopathic techniques are designed to relax muscles, improve mobility and correct any misalignment which may be present.

Advice. We will advise on home management, which movements to avoid, whether to use heat or cold or combinations and whether and how much to exercise.

Q. What else can go wrong?

Some cases of acute severe back pain can involve *disc injuries*. There are some

myths surrounding discs:

- Some people believe that all or most back pain is caused by discs which are the shock absorbers in between the vertebrae. Disc injuries do occur, they include
 - *strains* to the annulus or ligamentous outer casing,
 - *bulges* (where the central jelly-like nucleus pushes into the annulus) and
 - *prolapses* (when the nucleus pushes out of the outer casing)

The majority of back injuries involve damage to muscles and ligaments but not the disc.

- Some people believe that disc injuries do not heal. If treated and managed correctly most disc injuries will heal.
- There is a general belief that disc injuries all need surgery.
 - Surgery can be the treatment of choice in certain cases but these are a minority (approximately 2-3% of back pain cases)

Other causes of acute severe back pain are uncommon and include *fractures*. We wouldn't expect to find fractures unless there had been some serious and forceful trauma or in old age and long term steroid users who might have osteoporosis.

Some severe back pain can be related to problems with the abdominal or pelvic *organs*. For example kidney stones can give you severe back pain in the loin area (between the lower ribs and the pelvis at the back).

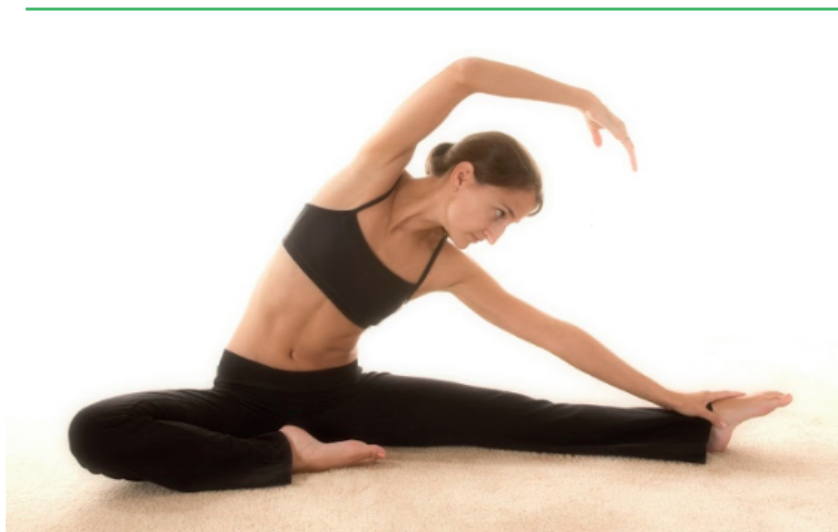
Many *rare causes* have to be considered. As osteopaths we take a detailed case history and do a careful clinical examination in order to check for Red Flags. These are warning signs of more serious disease. We do see these occasionally but the vast majority fall into the categories mentioned above – muscle, ligament and disc strains and injuries.

The key thing to remember is: if you are not sure what is going on, get it checked.

Nutritionist and Fitness Trainer Derek Wilson explains how strengthening your back can help reduce the risk of recurrence

"Many people complain about having a weak lower back and recurring back problems; because of this they often avoid exercise on that area, just in case they hurt it more. This is often not the case, exercising the area correctly in a controlled environment is very low risk for injury. Often it is silly things, like picking the dog up, which may cause an injury.

Strengthening the 'core' muscles in the torso is essential for assisting in avoiding injury. Simple home exercises done daily can have a huge impact on strengthening the key muscles which reduce back injuries. One of the most commonly recommended exercises is a 3/4 floor plank, if done correctly can give great results. Please consult a fitness professional to assist you with this."



Yoga and Pilates teacher Ava Monroe discusses flexibility in relation to back pain

Most people suffer from low back pain at some time in their lives. This can be caused by sudden injury, aging, poor posture, disc problems, weak muscles, carrying excessive weight and lack of flexibility.

As a movement practitioner I evaluate patients looking at their posture, mobility and muscle balance. We will work out an exercise routine incorporating correct body alignment, gait patterning, strengthening and flexibility.

In both Yoga and Pilates breathing is important as it helps to allow movement without tension. We also teach body awareness so patients recognise how their body compensates for pain. Stretching along with strengthening on a regular basis can make a big difference. We recommend Yoga and Pilates along with walking and swimming to achieve a supple, toned and healthy body working towards a pain free back.

Ava teaches Yoga and Pilates at Holly House Clinic on Friday mornings.

News

Easter Clinic Opening

Good Friday 3 April 2015	Normal opening
Easter Saturday 4 April 2015	Normal opening
Easter Monday 5 April 2015	CLOSED

Talk at Holly House Clinic for Pregnant and New Mums

We are holding another talk at Holly House Clinic on Tues 12 May 2015 6pm – 7.30pm

This talk is free and open to all who are interested.

1. Background to Osteopathy
 2. **Relaxin** (hormonal softening of ligaments during pregnancy) – help or hindrance
 3. **Postural adaptation** to Pregnancy
 4. Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP) / Pubic Symphysis Dysfunction (PSD)
How osteopaths can help
 5. **Childbirth** – Primitive Reflexes, Labour, C Section
 6. **Postnatal problems** – bending, lifting, back pain, neck pain, fatigue.....
 7. **Babies** – colic, sleeping difficulties, Feeding problems, cranial osteopathy
- We are also offering **free consultations** for anyone who is experiencing muscle and joint problems during or after pregnancy and unsure whether osteopathy can help
 1. Free 15 minute session with an osteopath experienced in working with pregnancy problems
 2. Examination
 3. Discussion of your problem
 4. We are limited to 4 free sessions directly after the talk on 12.5.15.
 - Numbers for this talk are limited. If you would like to attend please leave your details at Holly House Reception.

01482 875004 or info@wadsworthosteopaths.co.uk

Linda Hoyland MAR KFRP – Kinesiologist and Vitality Specialist joins the team at Holly House Clinic in March.

Linda, who has a background in the pharmaceutical industry, became interested in a natural approach to healthcare after being ill during her first pregnancy and finding conventional medicine was very limited in what it could offer.

Amongst other disciplines she works as a Kinesiologist.

Kinesiology treats the whole person, it's a hands on therapy that uses a wide range of powerful treatments and corrections to help bring your body back into balance structurally, nutritionally, energetically and emotionally.

It combines western techniques with the principles of traditional Chinese medicine to find blockages in the natural flow of energy throughout the body. Using muscle testing kinesiology can detect and correct nutritional imbalances, toxic build up, muscular and postural imbalances and sensitivities to environmental factors.

Linda is also bringing her **Facial Vitality Programme** to clients at Holly House Clinic. Using a combination of facial techniques derived from kinesiology principals to enhance the definition of underlying facial muscles and ultra premium, safe and beneficial products from the Arbonne range.

The Facial Vitality programme will help give your face more definition, helping lift the muscles and reduce facial lines, giving you a more radiant youthful look.

Linda will be at the Holly House Clinic, Cottingham Wednesday afternoons starting 4 March 2015. Enquiries and bookings 01482 875004

Smita Dutta BDS MJDF – Massage Therapist joins the team at the Lockwood Road Clinic in Beverley in March.

Smita says she always wanted to do something in the health care field. She graduated as a dentist and has worked for some time in UK hospitals as a junior doctor. She found the work physically and mentally tiring so she decided to become a massage therapist, gained the required training and started working from home. Now she would like to work in other locations.

'I wake up every day excited to go to work. It's not my work it's my life! I am passionate about my massage career. I love having the power to heal my clients. I am glad to be a part of pain and stress reduction for my clients.'

'My clients love to have whole body Swedish massage from me as I do not just do the massage in a mechanical way but I try to feel the pain they feel and massage each and every part including neck, fingers and toes. In addition to this I am trained to provide Indian head Massage, Thai hand and foot massage and the beauty facial.

Smita will be at the Beverley practice 30 Lockwood Road on Thursday afternoons starting 12 March 2015. Enquiries and bookings 01482 875004

Next Issue

The next Newsletter will be April 2015 and the theme will be the pelvis

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