



What to expect from your osteopath

High standards of osteopathic care across Europe



The European Standard on Osteopathic Healthcare Provision assures patients of the quality and standard of care they will receive when they visit an osteopath.

What to expect from your osteopath

As a patient you can expect your osteopath to:

- Make your health and wellbeing their main priority
- Treat you with consideration, dignity and respect
- Involve you in decisions leading to a treatment plan
- Respond promptly if you have any concerns
- Maintain, respect and protect your private information at all times.



About osteopathy

Osteopathy is a form of manual healthcare which recognises the important link between the structure of the body and the way it functions. Osteopaths focus on how the skeleton, joints, muscles, nerves, circulation, connective tissue and internal organs function as a whole.

Using skilled evaluation, diagnosis and a wide range of hands-on techniques, osteopaths can identify types of dysfunction in the body. Osteopathic treatment includes techniques such as stretching and mobilisation for general treatment of the soft tissues, along with manipulation of the musculoskeletal system, connective tissues and organs.

Osteopaths are primary contact health practitioners and are trained to recognise conditions that require medical referral. They are also trained to perform standard clinical examinations of the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, urinary, obstetrical and nervous systems.

Osteopaths work frequently alongside other health professionals.

The terms osteopathy and osteopathic medicine are sometimes, and in some countries, used interchangeably.

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Choosing an osteopath

Before visiting an osteopath check that they belong to a national registering or relevant professional body.

An osteopathic practice should be able to provide information about its osteopaths, their training and their experience.

They will also tell you what treatments are offered, and provide clear guidance about the fees that they will charge for their examination, treatment and any other aspect of your care.

Osteopathic practices should be hygienic, safe and conducive to the delivery of high-quality healthcare, and adhere to national health and safety standards.

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Case history and examination

At a first appointment, your osteopath will:

- Listen to and ask questions about your current complaint, your general health, other factors that may be impacting on your health, other medical care you are receiving or medication you are taking and record this in your case history. The information you provide will be confidential.
- Examine you properly. It is likely the osteopath will ask you to remove some of your clothing. Having obtained your consent they will undertake a thorough, sensitive and appropriately detailed evaluation of your case. You can stop the treatment at any time if you feel uncomfortable. You can ask a friend or relative to accompany you during your treatment if you wish.
- Ask you to make simple movements and stretches, to observe your posture and mobility. They will also examine the functioning of your joints, tissues and organs using their hands, and a highly developed sense of touch.
- Provide you with a full explanation of what they have found (the diagnosis) and recommend an appropriate course of action which may involve referring you to another health professional for further investigation, or a course of osteopathic treatment. They will explain the likely effects of osteopathic treatment and any reactions you may expect from treatment.

“You can stop the treatment at any time if you feel uncomfortable.”



Osteopathic Treatment

“Your osteopath will explain what they are doing and will ask you permission to treat you.”

Your osteopath will:

- Treat you using their hands and skilled manipulation of the musculoskeletal system, organs and massage of soft tissues. Your osteopath will explain what they are doing and will ask you permission to treat you. Ask any questions at any time if you are unsure or if you have any concerns.
- Your osteopath may also recommend individual exercises and self-help measures, as well as making use of other healthcare disciplines, as appropriate, to assist your recovery.

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.

Addressing concerns

All osteopathic practices should have a procedure for considering and responding to concerns and complaints.

If you have concerns about the care you have received, it is helpful to raise these with the osteopath involved, or their employer if they have one, to see if the matter can be put right.

If you have been unable to resolve this issue or if it is serious that it might affect the osteopath's ability to practise safely, you should speak with their national registering or relevant professional body.

Professional standards for high quality osteopathic care

The osteopathic profession is committed to providing quality healthcare for the benefit of patients, applying high standards of ethical and professional behaviour.

The *European Standard on Osteopathic Healthcare Provision* issued by CEN, the European standards body, provides a benchmark of the level of healthcare that should be provided to patients throughout Europe when it comes to osteopathic education, diagnosis, treatment and care. It does not replace national legislation where this exists.

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Further information

If you have questions about any aspect of osteopathic care, please contact the registering or relevant professional body in your country.

For more details about the European Standard on Osteopathic Healthcare Provision please contact the Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe (FORE) or the European Federation of Osteopaths (EFO). The members of FORE and the EFO initiated and funded the European Standard.



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