

## RESEARCH SHOWS THAT OSTEOPATHY IS EFFECTIVE IN HELPING INFANTS

By osteopath Caroline Penn DO (Hons) MSc MSCC

These days good healthcare practice involves enquiry to show that it is evidence based.

A few years ago, Caroline Penn at The Penn Clinic, Hatfield carried out a study investigating the effectiveness of osteopathy in helping infants to breathe through their nose.

The importance of establishing a nose-breathing rather than mouth-breathing habit cannot be over emphasized.

In infants, mouth breathing sets the scene for multiple problems. Infants can suckle through the mouth and breathe at the same time due to the arrangement of the epiglottis – something adults just cannot do! The infant who cannot nose-breathe keeps breaking their feeding to come up for air. They are not relaxed feeders. They tend to swallow lots of air which makes them windy and contributes to colic. As their nose is often congested they are also more prone to colds, which can become difficult to shift and the whole scenario becomes a vicious circle.

Osteopaths have identified vulnerable areas of the nasal passages which can be gently freed to promote nasal airflow. The Penn Clinic put this to the test in a study approved by the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Local Research Ethics Committee. Nine 4-6 week old infants with blocked nasal passages were given gentle osteopathic treatment over a 6-week period and parents reported using questionnaires.

The results showed an improvement in nasal breathing during the six-week period in all infants, with a concurrent improvement in all associated symptoms, which included restless sleep and feeding difficulties. No infants had any infections or any medications during the treatment period. The infants were followed-up after the next winter season and the improvement in sleeping, feeding and breathing during the day was maintained in all infants. The reduction in noisy night breathing and nasal mucus was maintained in 75% of the group, and the incidence of upper respiratory tract infections and antibiotic use of 85% of the study group was reported as less than their peers.

The findings indicate that osteopathic treatment over a relatively short period (six weeks) may have an important part to play in the short-term management and the long-term prevention of upper respiratory tract infections (colds, throats and ear infections) and possibly other problems in infants.

Note that infants who cannot breathe through their nose become children and adults who are mouth-breathers. This can cause many problems including poor facial development, mal alignment of teeth, also problems like asthma and sinusitis in adulthood. Hence the osteopathic saying '**As the Twig is bent – so does the Tree incline**'.

Osteopathy can help adults with breathing difficulties too, but it is so much easier when they are still a Twiglet!

Other research studies in recent years have shown the effectiveness of osteopathy in helping complaints in infants and children such as Glue Ear, Colic, Plagiocephaly and Stiff Neck. Phone the osteopath if you would like details.

**Appointments:**

Newborn infants up to 2 weeks old **free of charge**

Osteopathy and Homeopathy

We also check mothers

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