Osteopathy is a 'hands on' manual therapy and one of the oldest approaches to treatment of injuries in the joints, muscles, ligaments, fascia and tendons. Treatments take into account how the whole body moves and adjusts to pain. Osteopaths work with the patient to facilitate good structural alignment, tissue health and organ functions that will alleviate pain and prevent symptom re-occurrence. Osteopathy aims to improve the patients' long-term health and vitality. For example, Osteopaths can help the body fight the infection of the common cold and flu and shorten the duration of the illness.

The common cold can be relatively harmless, but also one of the most aggravating conditions to have. You may feel like you are dying, with runny nose, cough, sore throat, lack of appetite, headache, muscle aches and fatigue…but all your doctor can do is give you or your child a few days off and some cold and flu tablets.

There are many home remedies that have various rates of success, as well as natural therapies, but have you ever thought of osteopathy as a treatment for the common cold?

Osteopathic Treatment - Goal
To allow better function of the immune system in order for the body to heal itself.

Hands-On Treatment
Osteopathy can be of benefit in both situations but it's fairer on your osteopath to wait until you're no longer infectious with the flu before seeking treatment; usually 1-3 days or when your fever has subsided. The rationale for treatment in the case of a cold is to help the body fight the infection and shorten the duration of the illness. This is done by

- improving blood flow and lymphatic drainage;
- decreasing irritation of the nervous system;
- addressing muscle spasm and pain;
- promoting a sense of well-being and relaxation;
- sinus drainage techniques to improve breathing.

Treatment therefore addresses these tight muscles and areas of the spine which in turn normalises the function of the nervous system. As the nerves become less irritated the muscles relax, and the mucus becomes less thick and therefore easier to clear.

This is followed by work on the lymphatic system to help drain all these secretions and decrease congestion. (The lymphatic system is like the recycling and detoxifying system in the body which parallels the circulatory system). Again there are various techniques that can achieve this, including pectoralis/chest stretching, lymphatic pumps, articulation, and cranio-sacral techniques to get the sinuses draining better.

Whatever techniques your osteopath considers appropriate, the goal and end-result of treatment are the same — to improve functioning of the immune system and support the healing processes of the body. As you may have heard before, the body has a natural tendency
towards self-regulation and balance, and osteopathy works with these natural laws. Cold and flu tablets and decongestants all subdue the symptoms but do not really address the cause. You might get temporary relief, but not a long-term benefit.

Advice:

Next time you’re staying home from work with a cold, or your child has fallen ill to another infection, consider a visit to your local osteopath. In particular, if your child has had several rounds of antibiotics recently and keeps getting sick, osteopathy can really help support and strengthen their immune system. Osteopathy works well in conjunction with other natural therapies too, so there’s no problem if you’re also under the care of a naturopath, homeopath, acupuncturist etc.

Other individual advice will be provided on maintenance, breathing exercises and stretches, as well as methods of preventing colds and flus.

About the Therapist

Meredith Craigie BPHE hons., CK, DOMP, completed her post graduate education in 2011 from the Canadian College of Osteopathy. Meredith is a Certified Kinesiologist and Osteopathic Manual Practitioner who has been practicing in the field of rehabilitation since 1999.

For more information, please visit Meredith at Advantage Physiotherapy of Milton at 550 Ontario Street Unit 7 or call 905-693-8043 with any questions about my services. I look forward to meeting with you and creating a long-term relationship.