



# **Riverview Clinic**

## **Osteopathic Information Service**

### **Pregnancy**

For many women pregnancy means having to cope with a whole range of symptoms from back pain to morning sickness. As the baby grows in the womb, its extra weight results in a changed centre of gravity and posture changes from week to week. This can lead to a variety of aches and pains. As breast weight increases, this also causes changes and pain may occur in the upper back and neck.

### **Why osteopathy?**

Osteopathic treatment through pregnancy is a wonderfully gentle way of helping the body adapt to the changes which are taking place. The safety of mother and baby is the osteopath's first concern.

Advice from your osteopath can help you to change your posture and learn to use your body correctly through pregnancy. Osteopaths can also help to ease other side effects of pregnancy such as heartburn, indigestion, constipation and pain in the buttock, groin or leg (commonly called sciatica). Some patients, too, report reduced morning sickness after osteopathic treatment.

Osteopathic treatment during pregnancy is not new. For many years, osteopaths have used their skills to help, employing a variety of gentle techniques to ease supporting muscles and ligaments.

Every pregnancy is 'special'. Osteopaths focus on the mother as a person and take account of her emotional state and other factors as well as her physical condition. Treatment may be supplemented by exercises and other forms of self help which the osteopath may prescribe for the mother to do at home.

An osteopath can advise on positions in labour to help prevent back problems later. Pain relief techniques can also be shown to the mother and her partner or friend so that they can help during labour.

After delivery it is advised that mother and child return for structural examination, advice and check ups and, if necessary, for treatment.

## **Remember**

- Osteopaths are skilled practitioners.
- Osteopaths deal with pain every day.
- Osteopaths can advise on good posture.
- Osteopaths may help relieve back and leg pain in pregnancy.
- Osteopaths can advise on pain relief during labour.

Return for advice and a check-up after delivery.

## **Useful tips**

- Look after your back during pregnancy. Take particular care when lifting and carrying – especially lifting or carrying other children. Do not carry a small child on one arm for any length of time. Ask your osteopath for appropriate exercises.
- If you stand for any length of time, keep your bottom ‘tucked in’ to reduce strain on the lower part of your spine.
- When sitting, use a cushion for support and don’t sit with your legs crossed. Avoid twisting movements. These may cause torsional strain within the pelvis.
- Lying on your side in bed, place a pillow under ‘the bump’ to provide support and also put a pillow between your knees to prevent back strain.
- If you prefer to lie on your back, place pillows beneath your knees to keep them bent.
- Make sure all equipment (changing tables, pushchair, pram etc.) is at a comfortable height for you.