



HANDS-ON THERAPY AND YOUR BABY

Cranial osteopathy, bodywork, chiropractic adjustment and craniosacral therapy are some of the terms you may see when researching treatments for feeding or other related difficulties after the birth of your child. These are all hands-on therapies that can help release tension, structural restrictions and stress from your baby's body. In this article I will discuss several of these techniques and how they work as well as what can be expected from them.

Cranial osteopathy is a set of gentle techniques for the bones of the head that release tension and restriction in the soft tissues of the area. This set of techniques is performed by osteopaths and some chiropractors who also have this training. It involves light touch to the bones of the head which allows the soft tissues to release tension over a short period of time.

Craniosacral therapy is related to osteopathy, which is the system from which it was developed. This therapy is often called bodywork and can be performed by chiropractors, massage therapists and other licensed practitioners. Like cranial osteopathy it involves gentle touch for a short period of time in each area where restriction may be found. This includes the cranial (head) area, the spine and the sacrum (sacral) region. The therapist uses gentle touch to feel fluid moving through the body allowing the bones in these areas to move very slightly in response to the corresponding rhythm. This therapy allows the body to relax and release stress throughout the system. Many of the soft tissues in the head and spine are connected to tissues within the mouth, the hard and soft palate, as well as throughout the head and spine.

Chiropractic adjustment is focused on applying movement to areas of joint or soft tissue restriction to relieve tension and irritation in the associated muscles and nerves. This type of treatment is very effective when applied separately or following craniosacral therapy. Together these therapies relieve tension in the central nervous system and the tissues surrounding it as well as the musculoskeletal system.

If there is structural or tissue imbalance in your baby's mouth or jaw or other bones nearby it can cause tension, stress and difficulties with feeding. Latching can be painful for mom, difficult for baby and exhausting for the whole family. Additionally, nearby neck and shoulder muscles and joints can become restricted as effort needed to latch and nurse becomes more difficult.

Digestion can also be affected by structural restrictions like these and many parents report reflux, gas and bloating in their infants who are referred for these treatments.

The most common issues leading parents to seek these types of care are lip, cheek and tongue ties, also known medically as ankyloglossia. Altered head shape due to suction or forceps at birth can also cause some imbalance. Favoring turning the head to one side over the other or excessive stretching and difficulty sleeping are additional concerns associated with structural imbalances. These problems are often identified early on by lactation specialists, pediatricians or dentists. Ties may eventually be released with surgical or laser techniques, if necessary. Often the initial recommendation by specialists is one of the hands-on therapies noted earlier. With regular treatment there is evidence that the release of tension and imbalance produced by the therapy can speed healing time and lower tension causing many of the difficulties related to these concerns.

At TLC Chiropractic & Wellness Dr. Tracey offers parents several options for care. She is a trained craniosacral therapist and licensed chiropractor with additional training in chiropractic cranial release techniques. Any one of these therapies can be helpful or a combination of them. Generally, the doctor wants to see your baby a few times a week for several weeks when actively working with your baby to create new patterns of movement and reduce tension throughout the child's body. Less frequent care is needed for less severe concerns and as soon as the child's body is starting to stay more relaxed for prolonged periods of time between appointments. The idea is to reduce care along the way as the body needs it less and less, finally ending up with a schedule of regular maintenance care, which may be once per month or less depending on the child's needs.

References for further reading:

https://www.cochrane.org/CD004796/BEHAV_manipulative-therapies-for-infantile-colic

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27936211/>

<https://www.enhancedentistry.com.au/tongue-tie-clinic/>