



# Osteopathic Medicine

Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) are fully licensed and recognized physicians/surgeons who stress the unity of all body systems. They also emphasize the musculoskeletal system, holistic medicine, proper nutrition and environmental factors.

**Osteopathic Concept:** *The human body is a unified organism.*

DOs emphasize that all body systems operate in unison and disturbances in one system can alter functions of other systems. By recognizing the close relationship between body structure and organic functioning, the DO has a broader base for treating the whole patient.

**Practice Application:** *DOs follow a holistic, common-sense approach to health care delivery that views each patient in their entirety.*

The patient's mental and emotional status is also considered. The DO will pay attention to the patient's home environment, job, and other factors that affect health. Medicine must be more than an attempt to repair, relieve, or remove the end-product of disease process. The DOs underlying concern is to return the patient to a state of optimum health by dealing directly with the internal conditions that initially caused the disease.

**Osteopathic Concept:** *The body's musculoskeletal system is central to a patient's well being.*

Bones, muscles, tendons, tissues, nerves, and the spinal column work in concert with all other organs. The musculoskeletal system reflects many internal illnesses and may aggravate/accelerate the process of disease. DOs utilize all of the recognized procedures and modern technologies for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease (including drugs, radiation, and surgery). The DO has another pair of tools that enable accurate diagnoses and treat them effectively—their hands.

**Practice Application:** *Osteopathic manipulation of the musculoskeletal system is a viable and proven technique for many hands-on diagnoses and treatments. Often, it can provide an alternative to more intrusive therapies involving drugs and surgeries.*

Manipulation brings an added dimension to the osteopathic physician's diagnostic and therapeutic armamentarium. Because musculoskeletal dysfunction can mimic other disease syndromes, manipulation is an important component as well as a means of correcting structural problems. Disturbances affecting the musculoskeletal system can cause symptoms that simulate the onset of other illnesses.

**Osteopathic Concept:** *The body has a natural tendency toward health, as well as the capacity to resist disease and heal itself.*

The body's own healing power is a main principle of osteopathic medicine and a basic condition of all diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, osteopathic practice is designed to support, stimulate, and initiate the body's trend towards health.

**Practice Application:** *In addition to treating specific health problems, the DO's goal is to help every patient function at their highest ability. There is a fundamental concern with preventative medicine, proper nutrition, and keeping a patient fit.*

In coordination with appropriate medical treatments, the osteopathic physician acts as a teacher and a guide to help patients take more responsibility for their own being and change unhealthy patterns.

## An Overview of Osteopathic Manipulation Techniques

### Hands-On Contact

This is an essential component of the doctor-patient relationship and has a great deal to do with the patient's well-being.

### Soft-Tissue Technique

Consists of stretching, deep pressure, and traction to move excess tissue fluids and relax hypertonic muscles and myofascial layers.

### Myofascial Release

This procedure engages a restrictive barrier and is loaded with constant force until a release occurs.

### Cranial Osteopathy

Influences the structure and fluid surrounding the central nervous system, creating an impact on the total body and initiating the body's capacity to heal.

### Lymphatic Technique

Promotes circulation of the lymphatic fluids and assists the body's respiratory mechanism to move lymphatic fluids.

### Thrust Technique

Applying a high-velocity/low-amplitude thrust will restore specific joint motion. The joint regains its normal range of motion and resets neural reflexes.

### Muscle Energy Technique

Use muscles from a precise position and in a specific direction against counterforce from the physician. The purpose is to restore motion and decrease muscle/tissue changes.

### Counterstrain

Manual procedure in which the patient is moved passively away from the restricted motion barrier towards the position of greatest comfort.