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## **THE CRANIOSACRAL TREATMENT**

If your clinician has recommended a craniosacral treatment or a series of such treatments as part of your health care plan, you may be wondering exactly what these treatments are, what to expect during a treatment, and how they will affect your health. This paper should explain most of it, but please don't hesitate to ask for clarification from your clinician if you should not understand something or if you wish to have more information.

### **THE CRANIOSACRAL SYSTEM**

You are probably aware of the many systems that the body is made up of including the respiratory system, digestive system, the cardiovascular system, etc. The body also has a very subtle system unrecognized by science until fairly recently which is known as the craniosacral system. The craniosacral (CS) system consists of the membranes that form the meninges of the brain and spinal cord (down to the sacrum), the bones of the skull to which the membranes attach, other structures related to the meninges, the cerebrospinal fluid, and the structures that produce, contain and resorb the cerebrospinal fluid.

The cornerstone of the CS system is the finding that the bones of the skull are able to move as the cerebrospinal fluid moves through the membranes. While this information is not accepted by all health care professionals, the CS treatment is based on this finding and on the literature that has developed around the research using the CS theories.

Cerebrospinal fluid is made in the brain and travels through the CS system. It is then resorbed into the blood via the venous system. Production of this fluid (CSF) is halted when a certain pressure level is reached. As the pressure then drops, the CSF production begins again. This ebb and flow of fluid through the meninges of the brain causes there to be a CS rhythm unique to that system.

Since the membranes through which the CSF flows are attached to the skull bones, they move in response to the increase and decrease in pressure. The movement of these bones forms the basis of the CS diagnosis and treatment. The diagnosis of physiological problems is based on the clinician's ability to assess the rate, amplitude and symmetry of the CS rhythm. The rate of CS rhythm will go up and the amplitude will go down when the meningeal membranes are restricted somewhere. Lack of symmetry helps the clinician assess where a loss of physiological motion is occurring. This could be from injuries, inflammation, scars, etc.

There is a connective tissue sheath that surrounds all body parts. This sheath is known as fascia, and is connected to the CS system and is thus kept in motion. There will be a rocking motion of the sacrum and a widening and narrowing of the head during the CS pulse. A skilled clinician will also be able to feel this rhythm on other parts of the body as the fascia moves with the CS rhythm. The clinician will correct the rhythm with gentle, subtle movements of the skull, the sacrum and other areas where fascia is restricted. The following pages describe this treatment further.

## **WHAT CS IS USED FOR**

Because the CS system is connected to the rest of the body by its connection to the fascia, restriction can affect many other systems, most notably the nervous system, musculoskeletal system, vascular system, endocrine system, etc. Because of these relationships, CS therapy is used to treat many different conditions. In our clinical setting, we have found them to be helpful for headaches, sinus problems, anxiety, general stress, endocrine problems, muscular fatigue or stress, depression, TMJ problems and others.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

Your clinician will have you lie on a table on your back. You may wish to be covered with a sheet or blanket. Even though you will remain fully clothed, the relaxing nature of the treatment may make you feel a little cold. The clinician will then palpate (i.e. examine the CS rhythm by touch) by placing her/his hands on your head then your sacrum. You may be asked to shift your body slightly from time to time, but there is no other way that you need to be involved except to relax and enjoy the treatment. An attempt will be made to keep the room quiet and darkened to enhance the relaxing atmosphere. The clinician will use a very gentle light touch. She/he may move your head from time to time as she/he applies her/his hands to the different bones of the skull, but these movements will be gentle. The clinician will apply very light pressure as she/he attempts to release the restrictions she/he has felt.

The clinician will also use her/his hands on your abdomen and chest to release restrictions of the fascia at these points. She/he may also return to the sacrum from gentle release of restrictions there. More advanced clinicians may feel the CS rhythm in the body fascia by lightly holding your feet, your knees or your shoulders or by very lightly stretching your neck upwards. For facial bones that are more easily accessible through the mouth, the clinician may place a gloved finger into your mouth and very gently move these bones. This technique would be explained in detail to you before it is done. There are no surprises and should be no discomfort. If discomfort is experienced, you should let the clinician know at once so she/he may adjust the pressure or location of her/his hands.

You may feel yourself drifting off into a sort of sleep or you may drift off into a sound sleep. This is normal and you should allow yourself this level of relaxation. The treatment can take anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes depending on how extensive it needs to be. Your clinician can explain to you afterwards what she/he felt and what releases were obtained if you wish to know. You may feel a little “spacey” afterwards. You will probably be very relaxed and may wish to sit in the waiting area before going on to your next activity. Enjoy your treatment!

