

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

INTRODUCTION: Craniosacral therapy is a gentle, hands-on method of evaluating and enhancing the physiological body system called the craniosacral system. The system consists of 1) the membranes and fluid that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord, and 2) the attached bones (e.g., skull, face, mouth) that make up the cranium and the sacrum (pelvic bone). It plays a vital role in maintaining the function of the central nervous system.

During treatment, patients often experience somatoemotional release — a release of anxiety, frustration, sadness, and/or pain. Some also feel heat and tingling as blood and other fluids return to areas that have lacked adequate hydration and nutrition. Benefits include increased mobility, a feeling of relaxation and well-being, and an increased sense of vitality and hopefulness.

HOW IT WORKS: Through gentle touching of the craniosacral system, and taking cues from the body, the therapist helps the craniosacral system release restrictions it has been unable to overcome on its own. Energy pathways called meridians open up, and connective tissues soften and relax.

INDICATIONS: Craniosacral therapy can be used alone or in combination with other traditional or complementary techniques. It is effective for treating a wide range of medical problems associated with pain and loss of function, including: migraine headaches, chronic neck and back pain, motor-coordination impairments, colic, autism, central nervous system disorders, orthopedic problems, traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, scoliosis, infantile disorders, learning disabilities, chronic fatigue, emotional difficulties, stress and tension-related problems, fibromyalgia and other connective-tissue disorders, temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ), neurovascular and immune disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and post-surgical dysfunction. It is also useful as a preventive tool to bolster disease resistance.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Craniosacral therapy is not recommended for patients with aneurysms, intracranial hemorrhaging, and other conditions where the alteration of intracranial fluid might be dangerous.

TREATMENT PROTOCOLS: During treatment, the patient lies on his/her back (or sometimes in other positions) on a soft treatment table. For best results, the patient should wear comfortable, loose clothing, and should remove shoes, glasses, contacts, dentures, and large jewelry.

The therapist gently touches the face and sacrum area using a touch no heavier than 5 grams (about the weight of a nickel). S/he may ask questions during the session, such as What's happening with you? What are you feeling? What are you thinking? By focusing on what is happening, the patient can help the body make the changes it wants to make.

Responses during therapy widely vary. Some patients feel little or nothing. Some experience heightened emotions. Others have an increased awareness of body sensations, such as unusual tactile sensations, increased deep breathing, and increased bowel sounds. Some go into a state of deep relaxation or may fall asleep. For most patients, a series of craniosacral treatments is most effective, with the number of treatments depending upon individual health concerns and symptoms.

