**From Origin to Destination: Constipation + Osteopathy**

*By Sheelagh Stewart, DOMP*

People don’t always associate Osteopathy with helping to ease digestive concerns, but we do!
Just as we approach every concern – we look at the whole body organism and assess where there may be physical and nervous system restriction. From the cranium, spinal cord, solar plexus of nerves which supply the structures of the abdomen as well as to the arterial supply, venous drainage, and lymphatic system/drainage of the abdominal viscera; We ask ourselves, where is the shut-off that is interfering with the function? What are the possible obstructions, mechanical constrictions of nerve supply from head to spinal column, from which they branch off?

**So how can Osteopathy help?**

Constipation can be helped by addressing the hard and soft tissue structures that make up the framework and house the neurovascular structures of the body – by incorporating gentle visceral osteopathy, joint articulation and myofascial release of the spine, pelvis and abdominal viscera. Treating both vertebrae and ribs in order to assist that the splanchnic nerves as well as blood vessels in this region are unimpeded. The supply of nerves from the lower thoracic and upper lumbar segments help the nervous distribution to the intestinal tract and colon as well as the parasympathetic system from head to sacrum (where the parasympathetic supply regulates digestion). The diaphragm is also important as the vagus nerve (which connects head to stomach), also travels thru. If the nervous system is in a chronic sympathetic state of “fight/flight”, there will naturally be a lack of blood supply to the digestive area as well.

**Our wee ones:**

With children, the culprit areas that can slow down transit can oftentimes be physical constraints/restriction (ie) tight umbilicus, hips, pelvis (restrictions around physical corners) - in utero positions, and/or nervous system charges incurred in childbirth, in utero or interventions that may have happened during labour that could be contributing to the tensions or blockages.

As we are more than the summation of our parts, the aim of every Manual Osteopathic treatment endeavours to enhance the total capacity of unity within the structure-function relationship.