

# Ashmore Health Centre

“Committed to achieving your maximum health potential.”

# Myotherapy

Information for  
clients and therapists

This booklet is designed to give you a solid overview of what Myotherapy is about and to detail its potential benefits and risks. Please take the time to read this booklet as this forms a significant part of your “INFORMED CONSENT”, meaning you know and understand the potential benefits and risks involved before consenting to any procedure.

Please note that this booklet is written in 'lay terms' and can not be used as an authoritative guide to the principles or practice of Myotherapy or its related fields.

**Informed Consent is both your right and your responsibility. Never undertake any treatment or procedure of any kind until you are satisfied that you clearly understand both the potential risks and potential benefits of that treatment.**

## - What is Myotherapy? -

*MYO* means *muscle*, so Myotherapy is "muscle therapy". Myotherapy is also a part of a group of therapies known collectively as "Functional Therapies". Myotherapy (and all Functional Therapies) work towards conditioning and normalising the function of the body's muscles, including their associated tissues and structures. The ultimate goal is ease and balance of movement (function).

## - An overview of Functional Therapy -

To illustrate the way functional therapy's philosophy works, imagine a person with a right shoulder which is painful and restricted in its movement.

The shoulders' comfort and range of movement will be assessed and compared. We might find that the left shoulder is not moving quite as well as the 'books' tell us it should, but is not giving them any trouble at all. The right shoulder's movement is very limited and painful.

In Functional terms, the left shoulder is considered "functionally" normal. A Myotherapist will work towards restoring the function of the painful right shoulder to match the comfortable left shoulder. Once the right shoulder's function is restored to match the left side, the person's quality of life should be as if their shoulder had never hurt in the first place.

Should our imaginary patient be more concerned with the fact that in real terms, both of their shoulders are working without any problems **OR** should they be concerned that their shoulders still do not work quite as well as some text books say, even though they do not hurt or cause any problems?

Functional therapies philosophy says that the first choice is a more realistic and achievable expectation. Of course, if both shoulders can have their range of movement and comfort increased and still remain balanced, this is even better.

## - The logic of Functional Therapy -

Functional therapy relies on a simple, logical sequence of function and dysfunction within the body:

- Muscles attach to bone; bones meet to become joints; muscles move the bones which make up joints; if a muscle is dysfunctional, the associated joint which it moves must also be dysfunctional; if one joint becomes dysfunctional, other joints must take on an increased work load; the extra workload stresses other muscles resulting in more joints becoming dysfunctional; this dysfunctional cycle will perpetuate for as long as the original problem goes unremedied.
- Functional Therapies (Myotherapy) seek to find and address the original cause of a problem, allowing other 'dependant' problems to resolve themselves without the need for extra intervention.
- By correcting muscle function, the function of the body has a chance of returning to a normal and functionally effective state.
- Without correct muscle function, nothing in the body has a realistic hope of functioning at its optimum potential.

## - How does Myotherapy work? -

To answer this question, one has to understand a little of how the brain and muscles communicate. Signals going from the brain to the body generally tell the body to do things (**output**). Signals going from the body to the brain generally tell the brain about what is happening in the body (**input**). Input can be divided (for this example) into two different circuits, sensory input and pain input.

All muscles in the body have sensors to measure what tensions are effecting the muscle and relay those measurements to the brain. The brain relies on this feedback to keep all of the body's muscles at their right tones and tensions. This is just like you relying on your car's speedometer to give you accurate feedback. You believe and rely on your speedo telling you about your car's speed just like the brain relies on the feedback from sensors in the body's muscles.

### **How does Myotherapy work? (continued)**

The brain doesn't devote the processing power needed to keep measuring how much output is going to those muscles, it just monitors the feedback coming back from them. Keeping to our model of you and your car's speedo, you generally do not have to keep feeling how hard you are pressing on the accelerator to judge your speed, you simply check and believe your speedo.

If a muscle's sensors are not working properly, the brain might think that everything is fine when in fact the muscle might be quite dysfunctional. This dysfunction might be triggering pain, but pain is processed in a different part of the brain and on a different circuit so the brain doesn't know that the muscle's sensors are faulty. Imagine if the speedo in your car was incorrect, you would be unlikely to know that a problem even exists until the police pulled you over.

This is where a Myotherapist comes in. By working with the muscles through specific releases, stretches and movements, the brain is 'told' that its sensors are not working properly. The brain then measures how much output is going to the muscle and contrasts that against what the sensors are telling it and adjusts everything accordingly. If the Myotherapist has done their job properly, the muscle should be much closer to giving the brain accurate feedback.

When the brain realises that a signal is wrong, it corrects it, normalising the function of the muscle which was in spasm. When a spasmed muscle is released, the bones which those muscles are attached to can then move the way they are supposed to, releasing joint restrictions and helping to normalise the FUNCTION of the body's tissues. Normal function means a happier person.

### **- Does a Myotherapist "crack"? -**

The short answer is "No". Sometimes during the course of specific stretches or movements a person might hear a click from a joint (or even a number of clicks), but this is not the goal of the movement, nor are these clicks necessary for a successful adjustment. These noises are much more like the clicks you can get simply by stretching your back or toes etc. Certain areas of the body tend to make more clicks than others, with the rib cage probably the area of the body most likely to make noises during a stretch or release.

### Does a Myotherapist "crack"? (continued)

Even though the Myotherapist is aiming at normalising the function of the muscles, the ligaments that hold a joint together can sometimes take the opportunity to pull their associated bones back into proper alignment at or near the moment that the muscle spasms (which were originally holding the joint "out" in the first place) are released.

A Myotherapist does not and should never seek to make a joint 'crack'. Aside from this being the domain of other professions, Myotherapy works on a different philosophy. This does not mean that manipulative therapy ('cracking') is wrong. Myotherapists refer freely between themselves and other professionals who practice different forms of health care including Medicine, Manipulative Therapies, Physiotherapy, Medical Imaging etc. as is appropriate for the client.

### - Will Myotherapy work for me? -

No one therapy can claim to be able to fix all problems. If there was one therapy which had all of the answers, that would be the only type of therapy that existed because the need for other modalities would not exist. The logical end to this argument means that there are a number of different therapies which are all effective at addressing different problems and many will work for different people (even with the same problem).

If Myotherapy is going to work for you, you should feel some benefit immediately, either in movement or in reduced pain (or preferably both). Your Myotherapist should be able to map out a plan of action which you should be able to understand and feel comfortable with. **A lot of your recovery will depend on you following good postural habits** (see the enclosed YELLOW SHEET of rules which should be fixed to the back of the toilet door (to be seen daily!)).

The one guarantee any good therapist should be able to give you is that of giving you an honest opinion without fear or favour. If they can help you, they should be able to show you. If they can't help you, they should be honest enough to tell you **AND** recommend a therapist who they feel may be better suited to help you. They should also be willing to refer you to another therapist if they feel that that person will be able to achieve better or faster results for you.

### **Will Myotherapy work for me? (continued)**

**It is essential that you realise that to get better, you will have to make some changes, otherwise the things that have caused the problem will continue to cause the problem. Correcting postural habits, not wearing high heels etc. are essential to any long term recovery.**

The other essentially intangible factor effecting your recovery is the health potential which remains in your effected region. For instance, if your knee is sore, it might be a combination of wear and tear and muscular dysfunction. A Myotherapist might be able to help with the muscular component, but can do nothing for the wear and tear. The knee will not be perfect, but Myotherapy is likely to get it as good as the remaining structure will allow. That is actually the goal of Myotherapy,.. to help the body to achieve its maximum health potential.

### **- Does Myotherapy hurt? -**

Rarely. Most people do not find Myotherapy painful or even uncomfortable, but certain stretches and movements can be a little uncomfortable for some people. Your Myotherapist will always work within your tolerance levels and will ask you to speak up if the therapy is becoming more than just a little uncomfortable.

This said, most of Myotherapy's movements are so gentle and subtle that during their first visit many people wonder if anything is actually happening! Once a client is experienced in what to expect, they can often feel the tiny movements which makes up most Myotherapy techniques.

### **- Before your first Myotherapy session -**

Before a Myotherapist sees you for the first time, you will need to complete a detailed client history form which gathers all relevant case information. All of this information is important to you having a safe and effective Myotherapy consultation. Please take the time to read the parameters of each question carefully or you may end up giving us inappropriate information. You will need to allow around fifteen minutes or so to complete this initial consultation form when coming in for the first time.

### **- During your Myotherapy session -**

When a Myotherapist is working with you, they will ask you to give them continual feedback on how you are feeling and how each release is feeling (during and after). It is critical for you to give the most honest and concise feedback as you can during your visit. Incorrect feedback will lead to an ineffective visit.

Should your Myotherapist be doing anything that you feel uncomfortable with, be it because of pain, personal boundaries, cultural boundaries etc., PLEASE SPEAK UP and let them know immediately, even if you just want to know more about a particular release or stretch before it is done. It is your body so speak up and ask whatever you need to ask to allow you to decide if you are willing to have that particular release or stretch done.

### **- After your Myotherapy session -**

Responses following a session typically range from feeling relaxed and wonderful to feeling a little "worked over" but better at the same time. Many people find that they feel like going to bed early following a consultation. Your response depends largely on the scale and type of problem being addressed, how long it has been there and how fast your body can accept its new range of movement.

For short term complaints, there is typically little after effect other than sometimes a slight muscle fatigue feeling with maybe a slight stiffness for 12-24 hours or so after the visit.

For intermediate and long term problems there is normally a little more initial stiffness and muscle ache because your muscles are required to start working properly again. They are not always happy to be back in action. To illustrate; if you went from doing nothing to playing a long game of tennis, it is likely that your muscles would be sore for a while until they got used to the new routine.

A small percentage of people may feel a more dramatic effect and can feel a bit stiff and sore for up to three days following any form of manual therapy including Myotherapy. This is generally not a problem with the therapy, but just the way those people are 'wired'. If this is the case, the therapist will generally go far lighter for the next visit to minimise any discomfort.

### **After your Myotherapy session,.. (continued)**

Occasionally a person's body holds every little bit of work done in a visit and recovers its mobility far faster than most other people. This is good because they will recover from their problems more quickly BUT the muscles are going to have to adapt to a greater range of movement and action in a shorter period of time, possibly leading to quite irritated muscles for three or so weeks.

In short, there is no way of predicting how your body will respond to any specific type of therapy other than to try it. If you are experiencing something that you are not sure of, PLEASE call the centre and ask. Sometimes one simple stretch can help relieve a problem that might appear following a visit.

The staff at the Ashmore Health Centre can easily advise you. They are very experienced at deciphering a body's responses to Myotherapy.

### **- Why am I not sent for more tests? -**

Some people feel that they should have a lot of tests to determine their condition before anything happens. This is not necessarily the case. Your Doctor or Therapist can advise you in this regard. A test (X-ray, blood test etc.) is only warranted if the result of that test will materially effect the therapy applied.

To illustrate this point; you have a little toe that was stubbed badly five days ago and is still very sore and might be broken. Provided that there is no discoloration, feeling is preserved etc., a doctor is unlikely to request an X-ray as it would not change the way in which the toe was treated, broken or not.

### **- When are Myotherapy & other modalities combined? -**

Often Myotherapy will work very well for a person with little adjunctive (combined) therapy required. Sometimes a person may be getting great results after each consultation but find that the results are not holding for any length of time. In these cases, another modality like Acupuncture might be needed in combination with Myotherapy to achieve long term results. Likewise, referral for a different form of therapy might also be indicated. Talk to your Myotherapist before combining other forms of treatment with Myotherapy.

## **- What are the Potential Risks associated with Myotherapy? -**

The potential risks or complications listed below apply to Myotherapy as much as they apply to virtually any type of manual therapy.

**It is important that you understand these risks so you can make an informed choice as to whether or not you find these risks personally acceptable before consenting to undergo any form of manual therapy.**

**You may become stiff or sore** following any form of manual therapy including Myotherapy. See the preceding section for a complete discussion on this.

**A problem may be aggravated** by any form of manual therapy including Myotherapy. This can also potentially include previously undiagnosed problems. Nobody, yourself included, can know exactly how your body will react to any given form of therapy. Whilst every therapist does their best to minimise this risk, by the nature of the fact that the body is a living and dynamic thing, different reactions, responses and results can happen to two people with seemingly identical problems and histories.

Even after extensive testing and assessment prior to a consultation, some problems or unseen damage may mildly or even severely complicate any form of therapy, even though the therapy itself might be well advised and executed. This is simply one of those indefinable elements that is day to day reality in life.

**Emotional issues** may come up during any form of manual therapy including Myotherapy. Whilst the theory of "tissue memory" may be debated academically, at a clinical level therapists see its effects every day. This is of particular relevance to those people with physical problems which may be associated closely with an emotional time, trauma or incident.

For example, a sexual assault resulting in physical trauma is likely to have a number of deep emotional triggers linked to the current physical problems. When these tissues are worked on, there is a chance that some repressed memories can come flooding out (with crying, shaking etc. possible manifestations). In these cases, clients will be referred to appropriate psychology or counselling services for follow on therapy.

**What are the Potential Risks associated with Myotherapy? (continued)**

Some people report particularly vivid dreams as a lesser form of this phenomena following a Myotherapy consultation. People may also experience an increased level of emotional reaction to different situations, especially if those situations have some psychological tie in with the original trauma's circumstances.

**Unstable pregnancies may be endangered** by any form of therapy including Myotherapy. If you are pregnant, or suspect that you are pregnant, you must tell your therapist clearly and remind them of it every time you visit. They will ask you about any history of unstable pregnancies and current injuries etc. and then decide whether or not manual therapy is likely to be appropriate for you.

Some ladies will be referred to their doctor for an assessment prior to any manual work being done, depending on their history during pregnancy.

**Other conditions may be aggravated** by any form of manual therapy including Myotherapy. If under the influence of drugs or alcohol during a visit, the therapy may not have predictable or positive effects. It is important to be as clear headed as is possible during your Myotherapy visits.

Some viruses (or other illnesses) may become more severe following any physical work. For this reason manual therapies are generally discouraged when an illness is active in a body. Aches and pains are also common effects of viruses which can complicate a Myotherapist's work and your ability to give true feedback.

Some conditions like cancer may [debatably] be stimulated to an unknown degree because any physical work may stimulate lymphatic flow to some extent which is a common pathway for cancer to spread in the body. Likewise, tumours may be effected by any external physical disturbance (including manual therapies). The degree of risk is essentially debatable but might exist and must be mentioned.

There is still so much that is not known about so many of the disease states that effect Human Beings that no-one can honestly claim the ability to accurately and certainly predict how an illness or condition might respond to any given type of therapy under all circumstances. Practitioner experience and training can only reduce the level of uncertainty. The choice is ultimately yours.

### **- Using Myotherapy with other manual therapies? -**

Massage or other forms of manual therapy alter the nature of the tension within the body's tissues and can complicate a Myotherapy consultation which relies on examining the natural state of the body and its imbalances.

It is important to only change one thing at a time so that if a change occurs in your condition, you know what is responsible for that change. Say you started Chiropractic and Myotherapy at the same time and started feeling better... How would you know which therapy type was working for you?

### **- In Summary -**

- Myotherapy is a modality which aims to restore balanced and efficient function to a body. Those that Myotherapy can help often find it works quite quickly but Myotherapy will not work for every-one.
- Myotherapy is not about manipulations or cracking. It is about restoring communication between the brain and the body's tissues, assisting the body's efforts to achieve its own balance.
- Like all forms of therapy (and any part of life), Myotherapy carries potential benefits and risks. Some of these can be assessed prior to a visit, some others may only become evident during or after a visit. Make sure you have read and assessed the potential risks section on pages nine and ten before consenting to any form of manual therapy.
- Most people find Myotherapy relaxing, effective and very gentle. Some of the movements of Myotherapy, like any other therapy, may require the therapist to work into sore or tender tissues and this can result in a little discomfort (but should only be well within your personal tolerance level).
- Your Myotherapy experience should be an enjoyable and non-stressful one.
- If at any time you have questions, queries or concerns, you are encouraged to speak up as soon as possible. If it is of concern to you, then it is of concern to us.

### **- Booking conditions and terms -**

Because we do not double book, all missed appointments will attract a fee. Cancellations with less than 6 hours notice will attract a fee if we were unable to place someone else in that cancelled time slot. Your agreement to these terms is a condition of making an appointment with us.

