



# Craniosacral Therapy ...

## during and after cancer treatment

- **Craniosacral Therapy (CST) can be helpful in many ways both during and after treatment for most kinds of cancer.**
- Particular side effects of cancer and its treatment can be directly helped *once treatment has been completed* include cording, restricted movement, localised pain and shock/anxiety.
- CST can also be used as a form of *additional support during cancer treatment*, to reduce stress and improve confidence.

**Cording** is a tightening response to chemotherapy injections (and occasionally to removal of axillary lymph nodes) in the ligaments and muscles of the arm. It is often possible to help cording in just one or two sessions after the cancer treatment has been completed. *It is also usually possible to teach simple but effective methods during (or even before) a course of chemotherapy injections that prevent the cording from happening.*

**Loss of movement** is a possible side effect of both radiotherapy and surgical procedures. This restricted motion is sometimes accompanied by pain or discomfort. It can be quite local (e.g. the scar area) or in a quadrant of the body (e.g. one lung). Again, this is usually fairly simple to address once the cancer treatment has been completed. **It is particularly important to move to help the body recover.** Suitable classes include the ABC group (Fridays 10-11am Grove Road Church Hall) or more general non-impact exercise classes – for more information, contact Sally on 01603 432487.

**Localised pain** (typically at the site of mastectomy or lymphectomy operations, but can be near any operation scar), or headaches/pain elsewhere in the body that starts after an operation is often the result of scar adhesions. This is quite easy to treat in about 60% of cases, and the pain often at least reduces within one or two treatments.

**Shock and stress** are other typical side-effects of any life-threatening illness. Most people who are in shock experience increased or decreased emotional intensity, a sense of looking at events “as if from a distance”, and a reduced ability to feel

present in their body – sometimes this feels almost as if the lower legs and feet are not really there, and the ground is a long way off. It also usually manifests as noticeably increased anxiety. This shock can often be held “in the body” rather than being in the mind, and so sometimes needs more physical intervention to help it pass. I have both learned and developed a wide range of methods over 15 years of professional practice to help reduce and dissipate the effects of embodied shock.

**Combinations of the above vary hugely from one person to another. Very few people have more than one or two of the above side effects. In a general sense, residual shock in the body is the most important factor. In my experience, once this is helped, the physical symptoms heal themselves surprisingly easily and quickly.**

## What is CST?

Craniosacral Therapy (CST) is a form of hands-on bodywork, but is not massage, use of pressure points, or manipulation. CST places emphasis on health and the individual’s self-healing, rather than on pathology. CST has been devised around the simple but powerful idea of working respectfully and cooperatively with the body (rather than trying to “fix it” as if you were a car). The effects of treatment tend to be cumulative, so you will find that it does not need to be “topped up” to maintain health. Rather, every session ideally increases the body’s capacity for health.

## What happens during a CST treatment?

The first 15 or so minutes of the first treatment session is used for taking a case history, after which treatment begins. CST is basically a hands-on “bodywork” therapy, and usually you would be lying down, comfortably supported on a treatment couch. You only have to remove shoes, jewellery, hair grips and belts – otherwise *the treatment is carried out fully clothed*. The main exception to this is where work is required on soft tissue (e.g. for scars or helping the digestive system to work more effectively) – in which case, skin contact (usually on the belly) is more effective.



Pressure is usually light, sometimes as light as the weight of a 20p piece. However, this pressure is often varied to neutralise and assist tension patterns in the body, so from this initial light contact almost any pressure is possible – always with your consent and within your range of comfort. There is no manipulation or fast movement of head, neck or joints, and the treatment is usually very comfortable, relaxing and enjoyable.

## What is CST used for?

Many cases of “no hope” medical problems are surprisingly responsive to CST treatment, and the response is very individual and personal rather than being dependent on a doctors’ prognosis or diagnosis. In practice, the only way to tell whether CST is going to be suitable is to have one treatment – this will give both of us a sense of how your body responds and what a programme of treatment might involve.

CST has been used to help a very wide range of conditions. It excels at helping distressed babies, helping all kinds of neurological pain and nerve damage, and in speeding up the healing of any injury or surgery. Most people who come for CST treatment have suffered with their particular condition for decades, and despite this, there is a very high rate of “success”. CST is also useful for helping with many kinds of stress, and is particularly useful for complex emotional-physical problems, such as those found in any kind of accident or injury in which shock or trauma was a factor. This includes broken bones, sprains and any kind of major (or minor) surgery.

Many spinal problems such as stenosis, sciatica, whiplash, scoliosis and kyphosis respond quite quickly to CST. It has also been found to be suitable for people who are suffering from more serious spinal nerve damage, epilepsy and post-meningeal syndrome and even the after-effects of brain surgery. It is also often used to speed the recovery of people who have just received treatment

for cancer or other major illnesses. Another area in which CST is often successful is the treatment of headaches, migraines, TMJ syndrome and sinusitis. CST is also extremely effective for the reduction of pain and secondary problems arising from areas of scar tissue.

It is surprising how many cases of headache, bowel problems and sciatica are caused by abdominal scar tissue, and in these instances, sometimes only one treatment is enough to have a very substantial effect.

**Andrew Cook RCST** has been practising complementary therapies since 1987 and CST since 1994. He took part in the first Big C Complementary Care programme at the Norfolk & Norwich hospital.



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