

The Bowen Technique & **back pain**: reliable, economical treatment

What is the most common complaint brought to surgeries and therapists, day in and day out? Chances are it's back pain, if the statistics are anything to go by. Millions of people are affected; millions of workdays are sacrificed to it and the estimated cost to the country for back pain alone runs into the millions of pounds. The problem needs a "million dollar" answer and The Bowen Technique probably comes as close as any therapy can to providing it. Many a bad back and misaligned pelvis has been sorted out successfully using Bowen whether caused by accident, sport, stress, pregnancy, too much gardening or too long spent at the desk. Bowen therapists confirm that in their clinics they consistently see Bowen significantly helping or resolving back pain and dysfunction in more than 80% of cases.

There are several Bowen moves that are primarily responsible for this level of successful resolution. One is the Sacrum move - one of the most portable and easily used moves in Bowen. The procedure works on the SI joint which is subject to a lot of pressure and some slight movement in the normal course of life and especially so in work- and sports-related activities. In fact, the majority of work related back injuries involve the SI joint. The Sacrum move is performed with the client standing up and leaning forward with hands resting on a table or back of a chair. It can't be done lying down so this makes it ideal for pregnant women and for elderly people or those that have difficulty lying prone.

One keen advocate of Bowen therapy is Dr Joan Kinder, a Consultant Paediatrician and a Bowen practitioner herself. Her introduction to Bowen was due to a backache. She wrote: "I was introduced to The Bowen Technique during a joint consultation with a kinesiologist who had trained in it. I had been experiencing a constant ache in my lower back for some time and therefore became the fortunate recipient of a Bowen treatment. To my amazement, I experienced immediate relief and this happy state held over time. I was so impressed that I enrolled in the training course and now also use The Bowen Technique on a number of conditions."

CASE HISTORY: BACK PAIN & HIGH BLOODPRESSURE
woman, aged 54 3 treatments
Bowen Technique practitioner Annie Sewart, who is also a physiotherapist, treated Mrs C who came with a history of back pain, which included a particularly bad episode two years previously. In addition, she also looks after her disabled mother at home. Typically, her back pain would also travel down to her left knee. An x-ray revealed that 3 lumbar vertebra had reduced cartilage. Two weeks before she came for Bowen treatment, Mrs C's back "went" during a skiing holiday when she stood up from a sitting position! When she came for the first treatment, Annie noted that Mrs C also had high blood pressure. During the first treatment, Mrs C felt very woozy and was hot and flushed after, so remained lying down for a while. She said that her back was then painful for two days following the treatment but that something "snapped" as she was walking and the pain was gone. At her third treatment, she reported feeling a bit stiff, still, but had been playing tennis. In addition, her blood pressure was normal for the first time in two years. One week later, she was feeling fine and has not needed further treatment.

CASE HISTORY: ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS OF THE LUMBAR SPINE
man, aged 76
ongoing treatments as needed
Diagnosis by GP - ankylosing spondylitis of the lumbar spine, and confirmed by an MR scan. Mr G was in constant pain but refusing painkillers. He is a tall slim man with no obvious signs of muscle wastage. He was unable to walk without a walking stick to his bank, which is only 5 minutes from his house, and he frequently had to sit down. His GP said the only cure for the pain was an operation that could put him in a wheelchair. Neither Mr G nor his GP were keen on this idea. He had previously tried osteopathy, physiotherapy and acupuncture with little or no result but decided to try Bowen Technique. When he came for his second treatment, he was very much improved, walking without a stick and had no need to sit down on short walks. The pain was less,

muscle tension almost normal, and range of movement improved.
When he came for his third treatment, his movement was excellent, no pain, and very little pins and needles in feet. Since then, he has continued with a maintenance treatment once or twice monthly. He can walk around the town with no problems and no stick. He has remained pain free for a year, apart from a slight hiccup when he walked his son's very boisterous dog, but this settled after treatment.

It is clear why Bowen has become the therapy that people tell their friends about: it is supremely gentle, very relaxing, can be given through light clothing – and it works. Quickly, too – almost always the problem is resolved or significantly improved within less than 4 treatments, which ensures its popularity on the "word-of-mouth circuit".

All kinds of back problems are presented to Bowen therapists every day, often after a long search for an effective treatment. Dr Joan Kinder wrote: "If only The Bowen Technique could fit the criteria for acceptance in the current climate of Evidence Based Medicine, the benefits to individuals and the savings for the NHS would be enormous."¹ However, with the increasing integration of orthodox and complementary medicine, we can anticipate the day when The Bowen Technique will be one of the first ports of call for back pain sufferers.

by Janie Godfrey

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¹ Kinder, Dr. Joan, The Doctor's Dilemma; unpublished paper; 1996