

FAQ's

Nga Patai Auau



Did you know that all osteopaths are regulated by the same law as doctors and nurses? It's OCNZ's role to administer these regulations to help ensure everyone seeing an osteopath in New Zealand is kept safe and well cared for. All osteopaths must be registered and undertake ongoing training.

As part of our role, we are committed to ensuring the New Zealand public are aware of our responsibilities and the work we do to help keep people safe. It is important that New Zealanders know what we do so that you can have confidence in the quality of your osteopathic care, but also know who to turn to if you have concerns.

In addition to the requirement to register with OCNZ, osteopaths may also choose to become a member of Osteopaths New Zealand

(ONZ). Osteopaths New Zealand is a professional association that aims to provide a unified voice for the osteopathic profession in New Zealand by representing the interests of Osteopaths, as well as promoting and increasing awareness of Osteopathy.

The Osteopathic Council of New Zealand (OCNZ) and Osteopaths New Zealand (ONZ) communicate regularly on matters regarding osteopathy in New Zealand, however they are different organisations with different aims.

Frequently Asked Questions about osteopaths and the Osteopathic Council of New Zealand.

1 What is an osteopath?

Osteopaths are primary healthcare practitioners (like GPs and pharmacists). Primary healthcare covers a broad range of health services in the community – including diagnosis and treatment, health education, and disease prevention and screening.

Osteopaths have a particular interest in evidence-based diagnosis and treatment of the neuro-musculoskeletal system, and in pain management – often (but not always) through manual treatment. Osteopaths work in collaboration with other healthcare providers to ensure patients receive holistic health and well-being advice and treatment.

2 How are osteopaths trained?

To qualify as an osteopath, trainees must complete post-graduate education (a minimum of 4 years of training). The curriculum generally includes:

- Building knowledge of musculoskeletal health and osteopathic approaches to healthcare
- A deep level of clinical sciences, including anatomy, physiology, and pathology
- Critical thinking
- Ethical and legal practice
- Safe and effective communication
- Practising culturally safe osteopathy
- Ongoing and increasingly complex application of skills and knowledge in supervised clinical practice.

3 How do I know if my osteopath is competent?

Osteopaths cannot practise in New Zealand unless they are registered with the Osteopathic Council of New Zealand (OCNZ), and hold a current practising certificate issued by the OCNZ.

The OCNZ is a statutory body which is established under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act). This law covers the regulation of around 20 different professions. It includes doctors (who are regulated by the Medical Council) and nurses (who are regulated by the Nursing Council).

To obtain registration with OCNZ, an applicant for registration must meet legal criteria, including demonstrating that they have a qualification recognised by OCNZ. Once registered (a one-off process), osteopaths must also apply each year for an annual practising certificate. Again, they are required to meet legal criteria to satisfy the OCNZ that they are competent to practise osteopathy.

You can look up your osteopath on our online register. If you can't find the person you are looking for, please let us know so that we can check whether the person is registered. It is unlawful for a person to call themselves an osteopath unless they are registered with us.

4 What if I have concerns about an osteopath?

In our experience, concerns can often be resolved by raising the matter directly with the osteopath. This is particularly the case if you're unsure about a treatment the osteopath wants to provide, or why they want to provide it.

If you're comfortable doing so, we suggest that you raise your concerns with your osteopath in the first instance, and ask them

to provide you with more information to see if they can address your concerns.

If you do not feel comfortable talking directly to your osteopath, you might want to email them, or raise a complaint through the practice.

Alternatively, you can:

- Contact the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) at www.hdc.org.nz (free phone 0800 11 22 33) to discuss your concerns with its free Advocacy Service, or to make a complaint;
- Contact us to make a complaint. Please note that if you contact us, we are legally required to refer your complaint to the HDC in the first instance.

Contact us:

Level 5, 22 - 28 Willeston Street, Wellington 6011
PO Box 9644, Wellington 6141
Tel: + 64 4 474 0747 Fax: + 64 4 918 4746
Email: osteo.admin@osteopathiccouncil.org.nz

5 What is the Osteopathic Council?

The OCNZ is a statutory authority (i.e., an authority that is created by law) that is responsible for ensuring that osteopaths are fit and competent to practise. Our primary purpose is public protection – we do not represent osteopaths; the representative body for osteopaths is Osteopathy New Zealand.

There are 8 Council members on the OCNZ, made up of 6 osteopaths and 2 lay members. Applications for a position on the OCNZ Council are made to the Ministry of Health, and appointments to Council are made by the Minister of Health.

As well as providing a place for the Osteopathic Council to communicate with our registrants, our website is also an important tool to help us provide information and communicate with the New Zealand public.

If you would like to know more about the Osteopathic Council, please have a look at our 'About the Council' page.

We also have a dedicated section of our website for patients and the public. To learn more about osteopathy, to find an osteopath in your area, or if you would like to notify us of concerns you may have about an osteopath, please see our page for 'Patients'

