

VISCERAL MANIPULATION



Visceral manipulation is the practice of an experienced therapist using his or her hands to move and release fascial restrictions in your abdomen and pelvis to encourage the normal movement and function of your internal organs. Most people are familiar with the idea of joint and muscle restrictions causing tightness, pain and limited movement in their bodies, but don't consider the role of their organs. It is common place for people to go to their chiropractor, or massage therapist to treat pain and alignment issues; unfortunately, many times these practitioners may just be treating the outer shell of the problem if they aren't considering the mobility of your organs in your alignment and movement patterns.

Your trunk and pelvis form a boney, muscular, fascial outer shell to protect and encase all of your internal organs. Your organs are not just loosely floating around in there though; they are mostly supported by tissue called fascia and pleura. The whole thing is a sealed system under pressure that squishes everything tightly together; each organ is wrapped in its own pleura and bathed in a little bit of fluid so it can slide and move around or over its neighbouring organs. Things that affect the pressures in the system or the ability of the organs to slide and move around in their close quarters will affect the ability of the body to move and function properly.

Pregnancy, abdominal surgery, infection, jarring injuries and emotional behaviors can all affect the mobility of your organs or viscera. Pregnancy involves a lot of stretching and reorganizing of most everything in a woman's abdomen; this happens gradually over nine months and the body amazingly figures out how to create space for a whole other person in there. The issues can arise more during and after labour when everything is asked to change in a relatively short period of time. There is a huge pressure change and all of a sudden organs can start dropping back down; whether they find their proper, functional place to be depends on how the labour went, how much damage there was to the supportive muscles and if any surgery was done.

C-Sections are a much more invasive surgery than most people realize, but any abdominal surgery will create 'stickiness' in the viscera. As I mentioned, your organs are bathed in a small amount of fluid to allow them to slide around as you move; any time you expose the abdomen to air and surgical lights it is bound to create some dryness or stickiness that restricts normal mobility of the organs. A therapist trained in visceral manipulation by means of light touch can assess and treat any restrictions to help restore mobility.

Because the fascial wrappings of your organs are essentially one big continuous piece of connective tissue, restrictions in one area can manifest as symptoms in other areas. A good analogy is to wear a relatively tight T-shirt and twist a piece in one corner up into a knot. You will likely see and feel the pull from your lower left abdomen all the way up in your right shoulder; this same concept effectively happens inside you. Your body will start to 'hug' or protect the area of restriction which leads to alignment issues and compensatory movement patterns. Alignment issues and poor movement patterns tend to lead to pain and tension in the boney and muscular systems; treating these usually helps provide relief, but if the problem just keeps coming back, it is quite likely that the root of the problem may be a visceral restriction.

