



Relieve persistent pain gently with a new method of spinal manipulation now gaining in popularity in Australia. David Goding reports

dorn therapy

Spinal imbalances are believed to be the cause of a range of conditions, from headaches to back pain and eye and ear problems.

Dorn therapy provides us with a unique way of treating the human body – when it's in motion. While your body is gently moving, your muscles are able to relax, and the Dorn-therapy practitioner can work much more effectively towards correcting any joint or spinal imbalance.

"Every vertebra releases a pair of nerves that supports certain parts or organs of the body," says German-trained natural

therapist Barbara Simon, who introduced Dorn therapy to Australia four years ago. By working on the vertebrae you are actually working on the entire body."

Dieter Dorn developed the therapy in Germany in the '80s after suffering from increasingly severe lumbago that made even the simplest movements painful. He became desperate for relief, and his search led to a farmer also working as a "setter" – a fixer of backs.

After the treatment, Dorn was amazed. His lower back pain had completely vanished.

He then tried the technique on his wife who had suffered severe headaches for 20 years. By applying pressure to the sides of two protruding cervical vertebrae (near the neck), he

discovered that her headaches disappeared within hours.

Dorn refined the technique and taught practitioners the steps of treatment.

>>WHO BENEFITS?

Dorn therapy can be used for a number of conditions, some of which seem to have little connection with the back. For example, problems, such as headaches and dizziness, can be caused by nerve pressure around the cervical vertebrae.

"Fifty per cent of people come to me for pains in the body, while the other 50 per cent simply want to improve their wellbeing and health," says Melbourne-based Dorn

therapist Martin Preuss. "Some do it to improve their martial arts or performance arts."

"A lot of people come to us as a last resort. They have tried a chiropractor, osteopathy and massage, and yet nothing has really given them fundamental change like Dorn therapy."

"Your initial visit will start with a check of the hips for twists and the legs for any difference in length. A difference in leg length is usually caused by a bone sitting out of the actual joint, and can obviously cause a major problem with the pelvis and spine. It's estimated that around 80 per cent of people have a difference in the length of their legs. You can be born with different lengths of bone, which you can't fix, but there are also other causes, such as



sitting with your legs crossed, standing unevenly or putting more weight on one side of the body than the other.

"What happens is that body waste and toxins get into the joint, and it finally becomes congested, so the longer leg doesn't move back in again."

>>THE TREATMENT

Dom therapy usually begins with the patient lying on their back while the practitioner gently applies pressure to the cause of the problem, which may be the hip, knee or ankle. It then takes place standing, with the patient swinging one leg backwards and forwards while the practitioner works on the lower back, vertebra by vertebra. While swinging the left leg, pressure is applied to

the right side of the back, with the focus moving to the left side when the right leg is swung.

"I use my thumbs to 'walk' along the spine, and I look and feel for any kind of deviation that is a sign this is a vertebra not exactly in the position it should be," says Simon. "Then I work on this vertebra by pushing on to its side with my thumbs to get it moving back into its proper position."

"Then the client sits down and starts to swing one arm at a time while I work on the opposite side of the middle and upper back, up to the cervical spine where the client then turns their head from right to left. ○

HOW DOES THE THERAPY WORK?

The key to Dom therapy is movement. "Through the movements of Dom, the nervous system is kept busy," says Martin Preuss.

"Through using muscular movements, the spine is more open to change. The therapy is not preoccupied with holding the spine in position, and this makes it easier to get the vertebrae back into the position where they belong."

There is no bending of joints as experienced with a chiropractic treatment, and generally there is very little pain experienced.

"The client will notice it, but it's not an excruciating pain," says Barbara Simon. "Because of the movements it's very gentle."

This means an incredibly safe treatment and, as there is no strain placed on the spine or cartilage, treatment can be repeated as often as necessary.

"If it's an acute problem, one session can be enough," says Simon. "If it's an older problem, you may need to have more treatment."

It is also important to follow the treatment with plenty of fluids to flush away the toxins that have been broken down during the course of the session.

A WHOLISTIC APPROACH

While Dom therapy can be practised successfully on its own, it also can be used alongside other therapies, such as acupuncture and the Feldenkrais method of improving movement.

"I look at it in a holistic way," says Simon. "A back problem may not be just a spinal problem – it might relate to another area. But every back pain is treatable, and we have had great success by supporting the treatment with reflexology and acupuncture."

MASSAGE

Breuss massage, a gentle and sensitive treatment of the spine, is often combined with Dom therapy.

It involves massaging oil of St John's wort into and around the spine, expanding the discs and increasing the distance between the vertebrae, which results in improved flexibility.

"If the client is very tight, I will start with a Breuss massage, but normally I do the massage afterwards in order to stretch and nourish the spine," says Simon.