

# Healing From Head To Toe

By James Williams

**When people ask** me about craniosacral therapy, they often feel the need to repeat the name - "craniosacral therapy" - and end up taking a couple of attempts at pronouncing it. That's okay because craniosacral is one of those long words that you have to say slowly when you first say it. To clear up any confusion, and so we are all on the same page, here is how to enunciate it: "cray-knee-oh-say-krull." The short and easy version is simply: cranio.

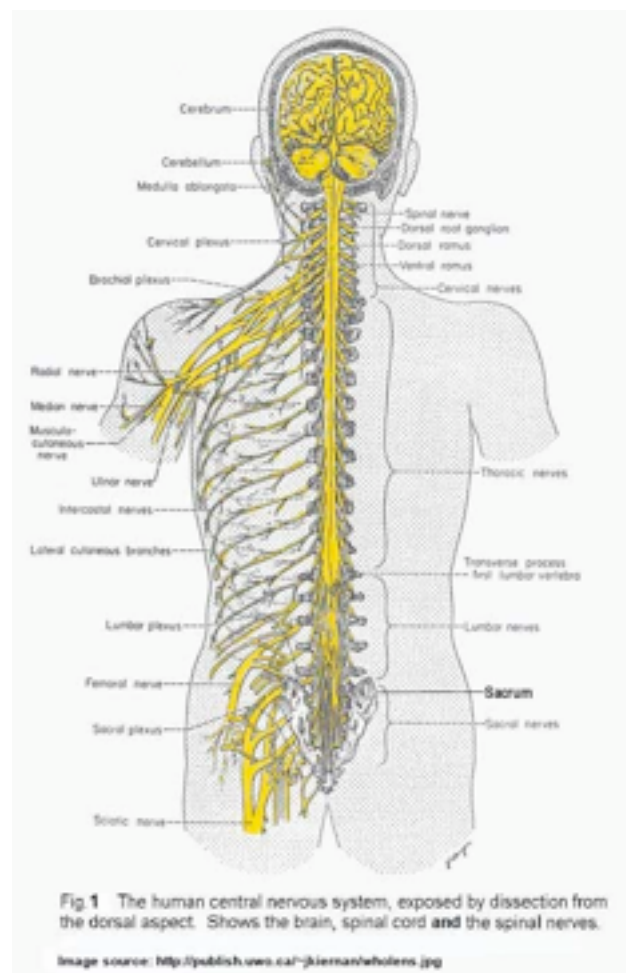
The next thing I'm asked is: "What is craniosacral therapy?" The words mean therapy for the head and sacrum. In theory, craniosacral therapy affects the head and the body right down to the sacrum, which is near the base of your spine. That's a simplified description. In reality, craniosacral therapy affects the whole body, including the legs and feet.

## Where is the craniosacral system in the body?

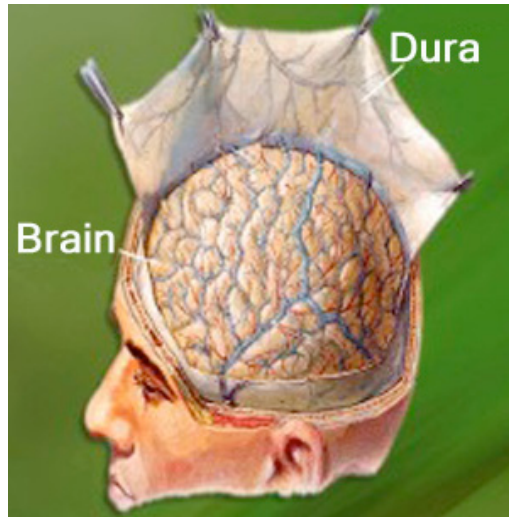
If ever a picture could save a thousand words, this is it. Have a look at figure 1 opposite as you read on.

Colored in yellow, you can see the brain in the head (cranium) and also the spinal cord, which dangles between the holes in the center of your vertebra. You'll also notice that the cord doesn't go all the way to the bottom of the spine. It actually ends just above the level of the lower back. The end of the spinal cord has nerves that branch out like a horse's tail. These reach down into the butterfly-shaped sacrum and stretch all the way to the feet. Along the spinal cord, nerves branch out and connect with your muscles, organs and bones.

We now know the craniosacral system is made up of the brain, spinal column and the body's nerves. Is that all there is to it? No, there's two last components. Your brain and spinal cord are covered in a protective, fluid-filled sac which has three layers, called the dural membranes or meninges. See figure 2 for a picture of the dura and the brain.



There is up to 100 ml, or 3.5oz., of clear fluid inside the sac, which is called cerebral spinal fluid (CSF). Scientists have found cerebral spinal fluid is composed of water, nutrients and hormones, and these nourish the spinal cord, nervous system and vertebrae. The CSF is actually made in the choroids plexus, a region of the brain next to little chambers called ventricles.



### **How does the craniosacral system work?**

The ventricles help to store and pump the fluid up and down your spine, and around the outside of your brain. The pumping action generated by the ventricles creates a craniosacral pulse, or rhythm, which can be felt anywhere on the body, and especially on the head and sacrum. Some medical doctors theorize that the pumping action is generated by the pressure wave caused by blood moving in the arteries. The link has yet to be proven scientifically. Unlike the heart, which beats at 60 to 100 times per minute at rest, the craniosacral pulse is active between 6 and 12 times per minute and feels very different to a heart beat. Healthy people have a strong,

synchronous, good quality craniosacral rhythm that pulses at 12 cycles per minute.

### **Practical Tip #1**

Physical movement also helps to pump the CSF, and even a gentle walk will, for most people, contribute to a healthy spine. Sitting upright on a Swiss Ball and gently bouncing your bottom on it also helps to stimulate the flow of CSF. Just remember to keep both feet on the ground, the torso upright, and look ahead. Stop after 60-90 seconds.

### **Headache Solution**

Occasionally, when clients come for craniosacral therapy, they forget to tell me they have a headache when they walk in the door. Some clients keep quiet and decide to conduct their own experiment to test out the effectiveness of the therapy. At the start of the session, when I place my fingers on their head, I notice a weakened rhythm on one side or over a specific part of the head. Within five minutes, the craniosacral rhythm is restored to both sides the brain, becoming stronger and synchronous. Part way through the session, I then hear the client say to me: "You know, I came in with a headache, and now it's gone." Headaches can have many triggers, and skull and neck tension are just two of the many causes that craniosacral therapy may eliminate.

### **How does the rhythm reach the rest of the body?**

The CSF is more than just water and nutrients. As it flows around the outside of the brain, it goes on a shopping trip and collects hormones, glucose, proteins and other minerals, and drops them off at various points along the spinal cord. On the physical

level, these nutrients can activate physiological processes inside the spinal cord, nerves, organs, muscles and bones.

On an invisible level, the fluid also contains life force energy, an invisible and intelligent force that insures the nutrients and hormones go to the right places in the body. If you doubt the presence of life force, ask yourself this: "What governs, guides and organizes all the little processes that turn a bloody cut on my finger into a smooth, healed patch of skin?"

The craniosacral pulse works just like a wave machine at a swimming pool. When the wave machine is turned on, a special pump sends energy into the water several times a minute. This generates several consecutive waves. Unless you're out of the water, you'll get carried along with the wave! The same thing happens with the craniosacral system. The energy wave that gets pushed out by the ventricles is carried into the CSF and hits the spinal cord. Since nerves are a physical extension of the spinal cord, the energy is passed into the nerves, which in turn penetrate the muscles, bones and organs. This is how the craniosacral pulse is sent out to all parts of your body and can be felt anywhere.

When I feel the rhythm on a person's body and it is non-synchronous, slow or has a poor quality feel, it indicates that there is a physical restriction nearby that affects how the nerves and how that body part is functioning. My job as a craniosacral therapist is to work with the person's body to release the restriction and restore the body part to better health. My role as a therapist is to only do this at the pace the person's body wants to work at - not to force anything.

### **Practical Tip #2**

Resetting the flow of craniosacral fluid is called still point and can feel very relaxing. It's also easy to do at home or work. Still points also help with headaches, tension and migraines, and are a good way to take five minutes to relax and rejuvenate.

To make your own still point inducer, you need a pair of sports socks, a bit longer than ankle length, and two tennis balls. Place one tennis ball inside the first sock. Tie a tight knot around the ball. Take the first ball and sock and drop them into the second sock. Ensure you place the knotted end into the sock first so it doesn't touch the second ball. Add the second tennis ball into the second sock. Tie a tight knot in the second sock. Your knot must be tight enough to stop the balls moving apart.

Now you're ready to get some rest and relaxation. Lie down on your back and place your still point device on the floor so it is touching your occiput, which feels like a ridge at the back of your head. See figure 3 as a guide to where this area is on your head. Close your eyes. After three minutes, remove the still point inducer for 30 seconds. You can then repeat these steps up to two more times if you wish. Practicing this four to five times a day can be very helpful for people with anxiety or depression. Breathing deeply into your tummy will also help you to feel even more relaxed and refreshed.

There are a few caveats about the use of still points. If you have had a stroke, been unconscious or experienced a head injury in the last few days, do not perform this technique. Consult with a medical doctor. If you are in the later stages of pregnancy, be aware that this technique may induce birth and should not be used.

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### **Who can benefit from craniosacral therapy?**

Anyone and everyone. If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, craniosacral therapy will help you to relax and release physical, mental and emotional tension. The mechanism behind this is another article entirely! Anyone who's had surgery, a C- section birth, a car accident, sciatica, neck and/or back pain can benefit, in addition to children and adults who experience attention deficient disorder. To receive the maximum benefit, ask me how a series of sessions can help you rebalance your entire craniosacral system. If a person has held on to pain and tension for years, learning to live in a stress and pain-free body may take time. Injuries from a recent car accident may, however, be healed much faster. Each person has to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

### **An action step to take.**

The discoverer of CranioSacral Therapy, John Upledger, D.O., has written a fascinating, entertaining and informative little book titled: Your Inner Physician And You. It is easy to read and contains enchanting real-life accounts that made it very difficult for me to put the book down, let alone give it back! You might think that I would automatically be biased, being a craniosacral therapist, however I read the book before I knew anything about the subject and know that you will enjoy it too.

**Now you can experience CranioSacral Therapy in Atlanta with James Williams.  
Call 404-475 5569 today to book your appointment!**

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