

Circle of Health Wellness Center

December 2010 Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

The Benefits of Massage

Bodywork Goes Beyond Relaxation

As you lie on the table under crisp, fresh sheets, hushed music draws you into the moment. The smell of sage fills the air and you hear the gentle sound of massage oil being warmed in your therapist's hands. Once the session gets underway, the daily stressors and aching muscles fade into an oblivious 60 minutes of relief, and all you can comprehend right now is not wanting it to end.

But what if that hour of massage did more for you than just take the pressures of the day away? What if that gentle, Swedish massage helped you combat cancer? What if bodywork helped you recover from a strained hamstring in half the time? What if your sleep,

cultures. Touching is a natural human reaction to pain and stress, and for conveying compassion and support. When you bump your head or have a sore calf, the natural response is to rub it to feel better. The same was true of our earliest ancestors.

Healers throughout time and throughout the world have instinctually and independently developed a wide range of therapeutic techniques using touch. Many are still in use today, and with good reason. We now have scientific proof of the benefits of massage -- benefits ranging from treating chronic diseases and injuries to alleviating the growing tensions of our modern lifestyles. Having a massage does more



Along with easing stress -- the No. 1 cause of disease -- massage has a long list of benefits.

digestion, and mood all improved with massage and bodywork? What if these weren't just "what if's"?

Evidence is showing that the more massage you can allow yourself, the better you'll feel. Here's why:

Massage as a healing tool has been around for thousands of years in many

than just relax your body and mind -- there are specific physiological and psychological changes that occur, and even more so when massage is utilized as a preventative, frequent therapy and not simply mere luxury. Massage not only feels good, but it can cure what ails you.

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Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love.

-Hamilton Mabie

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The Fallout of Stress

Experts estimate that 80 percent to 90 percent of disease is stress-related. Massage and bodywork is there to combat that frightening number by helping us remember what it means to relax. The physical changes massage brings to your body can have a positive effect in many areas of your life. Besides increasing relaxation and decreasing anxiety, massage lowers blood pressure, increases circulation, improves injury recovery, encourages deep sleep, and increases concentration. It reduces fatigue and gives you more energy to handle stressful situations.

Massage is a perfect elixir for good health, but it can also provide an integration of body and mind. By producing a meditative state or heightened awareness of the present moment, massage can provide emotional and spiritual balance, bringing with it true relaxation and peace.

The incredible benefits of massage are doubly powerful if taken in regular "doses." Researchers from the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami, found that recipients of massage can benefit even in small doses (15 minutes of chair massage or a half-hour table session). They also note that receiving bodywork two to three times a week is even more beneficial. While this may not be feasible, it's nice to know that this "medicine" only gets better with frequency.

What It Does

In an age of technical and, at times, impersonal medicine, massage offers a drug-free, non-invasive, and humanistic approach based on the body's natural ability to heal itself. Following is a brief list of the many known, research-based benefits of massage and bodywork:

- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs;
- Stimulates the flow of lymph, the body's natural defense system, against toxic invaders. For example, in breast cancer patients, massage has been shown to increase the cells that fight cancer.

Furthermore, increased circulation of blood and lymph systems improves the condition of the body's largest organ -- the skin;

- Relaxes and softens injured and overused muscles;
- Reduces spasms and cramping;
- Increases joint flexibility;
- Reduces recovery time and helps prepare the body for strenuous workouts, reducing subsequent muscle pain of athletes at any level;
- Releases endorphins -- the body's natural painkiller -- and is proving very beneficial in patients with chronic illness, injury, and post-op pain;
- Reduces post-surgery adhesions and edema and can be used to reduce and

realign scar tissue after healing has occurred;

- Improves range-of-motion and decreases discomfort for patients with low back pain;
- Relieves pain for migraine sufferers and decreases the need for medication;
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles and reduces shortening of the muscles for those with restricted range of motion;
- Assists with shorter labor for expectant mothers, as well as reduces the need for medication, eases postpartum depression and anxiety, and contributes to a shorter hospital stay.

The benefits of massage are diverse. No matter how great it feels, massage isn't just a luxury; it's a health necessity.



To get the full benefits of massage, take it easy after your session and let it soak in.

Healthy Holidays

Five Tips for the Natural Traveler

Planning a vacation or business trip? Consider packing a small kit of natural remedies before you go. Unfamiliar surroundings, unusual foods, and jet lag can make you vulnerable to viruses, stress, and gastrointestinal (GI) upset. Colorado Naturopathic Physician Michael Sutton suggests the following items:

1. GRAPEFRUIT SEED EXTRACT

This extract fights and prevents viruses and helps reduce symptoms of diarrhea and GI upset. It can even be used to decontaminate water (4-5 drops extract per quart of water). A few days before you leave, mix 4-5 drops with juice or water and drink it before bedtime, and continue for the duration of your trip. If you do catch a cold or flu, you can drink as much as 8-10 drops, 3-4 times a day.

2. AIRBORNE

Available in natural products stores, Airborne is an effervescent tablet containing herbs, antioxidants, vitamin C, and amino acids. It helps prevent and

fight colds, as well as motion sickness, when traveling.

3. MELATONIN

To ease jet lag, Sutton suggests leaving your watch set for the time zone from which you're departing. When your watch shows your normal bedtime, take 3-6mg of melatonin, then go to sleep to regulate yourself quickly and easily to the new time zone.

4. BACH FLOWER RESCUE REMEDY

To calm nerves and reduce anxiety, place a few drops of this remedy under your tongue when you're feeling anxious, or add 5-6 drops to your water bottle and drink throughout the day.

5. WATER

H₂O is essential to healthy travel. Drink lots of water and avoid alcohol, as dehydration is a major cause of travel-related illness.

By packing a few natural remedies and paying attention to your body's needs, you'll be able to fully enjoy your trip.



Staying healthy is key to a good vacation.

Easing Holiday Angst

Five Stress Busters for a Joyous Season

You enter the holiday season with the best of intentions -- looking forward to time spent with family and friends, decorating, shopping, baking. But as soon as you pile holiday activities on top of an already busy life, you're likely to find yourself relating more to Ebenezer Scrooge than Martha Stewart.

Consider these five suggestions to keep holiday stress at bay:

1. DETERMINE A SHOPPING BUDGET

For many, gift giving is an important part of the holidays, serving as a way to express love and appreciation for friends and family. But when the credit card bills arrive in January, you may discover you've extended your holiday stress well into the New Year. Plan your budget in

advance, determine what you can spend, and stick to the plan.

2. CREATE A TIME BUDGET

Many will make a shopping budget, but what about making a time budget? Before accepting every invitation this year, decide ahead how many parties you can and want to attend while maintaining your sanity. Make choices about your time commitments based on what you'd really like to do this year, rather than what you think you should do or what you've always done. Don't forget to leave time for yourself.

3. SET FOOD-INTAKE BOUNDARIES

You'll likely be tempted to eat in excess, and don't be too hard on yourself if you don't stick to your pre-holiday eating

standards. But do decide ahead of time just how much you'll deviate from your eating routine.

4. STICK TO YOUR EXERCISE REGIMEN

Regular exercise is a powerful stress buster. You'll feel better, sleep better, avoid weight gain, boost your immune system, and maintain a positive outlook about yourself. While it may seem like an easy time concession to make, don't give in to the idea. Stick to exercise, and you'll thank yourself for it.

5. TAKE TIME TO REST

Take time from your schedule to honor the cycles of the season. The holidays fall during winter solstice -- the shortest day of the year. Learn from nature, and get plenty of rest.

*The best and
most beautiful
things cannot be
seen or touched.
They must be felt
with the heart.
Wishing you
happiness.*
-Helen Keller

December 1st-31st

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