

## **The Effects of Massage**

Massage is the manipulation of soft tissue effecting a change in the surrounding tissue and structures. Our bodies and posture are held in balance by the muscular system. Although a single massage will be enjoyable, the effects of massage are cumulative and a course of massage treatments will bring the most benefits. Regular massage can have the effect of strengthening and toning the entire body mechanism. Massage can stimulate or calm the nervous system depending upon what is required by the individual-and thus help reduce fatigue, leaving the receiver with a feeling of replenished energy. At its best, massage has the potential to restore the individual physically, mentally and spiritually.

## **Medical Benefits of Massage Therapy**

Undoubtedly, massage makes a body feel good. But are there any proven medical benefits? Massage is an ancient art, mentioned in Chinese literature as early as 3000 BC with roots in the early history of medicine; massage has been an integral part of the health systems of most cultures through the centuries.

Perhaps the most well known and immediate benefits of massage are reducing stress, easing away tension, and helping clear the mind. Through the stretching and loosening of muscles, massage soothes nerves and alleviates muscle tension. Through the stimulation of blood and lymph circulation, massage replenishes muscles with fresh oxygen and nutrients while simultaneously flushing away metabolic waste products. The end of a massage session should leave individuals with a happy blend of energy and relaxation, rejuvenation and tranquility.

There is still relatively little scientific evidence to attest to the medical benefits of massage. However, doctors are becoming increasingly more willing to prescribe or recommend massage therapy. They are finding that it can be very useful in relieving their patients' pain.

And though scientific proof is limited right now, personal testimonies abound. Each year, more people in America sign up for a massage. The numbers are now almost double what they were five years ago. If you haven't already tried it, maybe it's time to find out just what massage therapy can do for you!

## **Therapeutic Massage Aide Medical Conditions**

- Allergies
- Anxiety & depression
- Arthritis (both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis)
- Asthma and bronchitis
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Chronic and acute pain
- Circulatory problems
- Digestive disorders, including spastic colon, constipation and diarrhea
- Headache, especially when due to muscle tension
- Gastrointestinal disorders (including spastic colon, colic and constipation)
- Headache
- Immune function disorders
- Insomnia
- Myofascial pain (a condition of the tissue connecting the muscles) and Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction
- Premature birth
- Reduced range of motion
- Sinusitis
- Sports injuries (including pulled or strained muscles and sprained ligaments)
- Stress

## **Massage is Beneficial in Combating Aging:**

Therapeutic massage is effective in combating the negative effects of aging noticed in the middle to late years of life. It helps keep body tissues and basic functions in a more youthful state. Deep massage helps break up the dimples. When combined with a sensible diet and weight loss program, even stubborn fat pockets can be removed.

- Enhances tissue elasticity and joint flexibility
- Promotes healthy vibrant skin
- Improves immune system functioning
- Relieves muscle aches and stiffness

## **General Benefits of Massage Therapy**

- Massage feels good and it is a pleasurable experience.
- Massage increases your body self-awareness and sensitivity.
- Massage reduces your stress, tension and anxiety levels.
- Massage calms the nervous system and has a centering/balancing effect.
- Massage relaxes, focuses and clears your mind.
- Massage helps to improve and maintain your posture.
- Massage helps to fulfil your need for a caring and nurturing touch.
- Massage encourages self-esteem and a general feeling of well being.
- Massage increased your awareness of the whole being connection and improves your emotional awareness.

## **Benefits to Your Muscular System**

- Massage increases the blood supply and nutrition to your muscles.
- Massage helps your muscles recover more quickly from exertion and fatigue.
- Massage relaxes your muscles, effectively reducing spasms, tension and cramping.
- Massage reduces and breaks down adhesions (knots) and fibrosis.
- Massage stretches your connective tissue.
- Massage helps to re-establish your proper muscular tone.
- Massage reduces your muscle and soft tissue pain.
- Massage supports increased work capacity and encourages your metabolism.
- Massage helps to prevent muscular atrophy (wasting from injury and paralysis).

## **Benefits to Your Skeletal System:**

- Massage improves the circulation and nutrition of the joints and helps increase your range of joint movement.
- Massage reduces joint strain and compression through releasing tight muscles and tendons.
- Massage increases the ease and efficiency of your movements.
- Massage helps to increase the retention of nitrogen, phosphorous, and sulfur in the bones and this aids in fracture healing.

### **Benefits to Your Circulatory System:**

- Massage increases the nutrition of the tissues via an increased exchange of fluids and materials.
- Massage, via the mechanical actions on the soft tissues, produces a dilation of the blood vessels, which helps to improve your circulation.
- Massage helps to reduce the lack of blood and by direct pressure and stimulation reduces pain due to the irritation of nerves that control your circulatory system.
- Massage enhances the elimination of the waste products of your metabolism.
- Massage helps to reduce any swelling and contusions.
- Massage increases the number of red blood cells in your circulation.
- Massage has the overall effect of lowering your blood pressure and reduces your pulse rate.
- Massage facilitates tissue healing through the enhancement of circulation.
- Massage increases tissue fluid and assists lymphatic circulation thus reducing swelling and enhancing the immune and filtering activities of this system.
- Massage increases both your venous and lymphatic flow

### **Benefits to your Nervous system:**

- Massage can have a sedative, stimulating or even exhausting effect on the nervous system depending on the type and length of treatment given.
- Massage stimulates the touch, pressure and proprioceptive receptors of the skin and underlying tissue.
- Massage helps to balance the autonomic nervous system.
- Massage relaxes the muscles and helps to re-establish proper tonus through its effect on the neuromuscular reflex pathways.
- Massage is known to affect the neurotransmitters of the brain and increase endorphin secretion in particular (natural painkillers).
- Massage can help reduce nerve entrapment through the release of soft tissue or muscular binding.
- Massage can reduce nerve root compression caused by muscular tension.

### **Benefits to Your Digestive and Excretory Systems:**

- Massage increases the excretion (via the kidneys) of fluids and waste products of protein metabolism, inorganic phosphorous and salt in normal individuals.
- Massage can facilitate elimination through the large intestines by mechanically stimulating peristalsis and improving tone.
- Massage stimulates peristalsis and can reduce cramping or spasm in the digestive tract.

### **Benefits to Your Skin:**

- Massage helps to reduce tension in the skin and adjoining tissues as well as increasing its circulation and improve its nutrition.
- Massage depending on the medium used to apply it can help to re-moisturize, and soften dry skin.
- Massage can help with some skin conditions like eczema, but please check with your Doctor to make sure that what you have is not contagious.

### **Benefits to Your Respiratory System:**

- Massage deepens and normalizes the breathing pattern through relaxation, and release of tension in the breathing structures, both the rib cage and the muscles of respiration.
- Massage can help to relieve congestion in the lungs through percussive and compressive movements.
- Massage increases the action of the heart, stimulating the blood flow to and from the lungs, helping with the elimination of waste and the absorption of oxygen.

### **Massage - Precautions/ Contra-Indications:**

Certain medical conditions require the exercise of caution concerning the advisability of giving or receiving massage. If you are in any doubt, or if you or your partner are under medical supervision, check with your doctor or other qualified medical practitioner before embarking on massage therapy. This advice applies particularly in the case of cardiovascular conditions and heart disease, especially in cases of thrombosis, phlebitis, and edema.

Seek medical advice before having a massage if you suffer from phlebitis, thrombosis, varicose veins, severe acute back pain, or fever.

# **Massage Therapy** **Literature**

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