

Why Should I Get a Massage?

By Mary Decker, Licensed Massage Therapist

For some massage therapy may be seen as a special “treat,” or an escape from stress in a fast paced world, for others, massage therapy is much more than this. As far back as 400 B.C, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, employed massage and manipulation in healing his patients. Since that time it has been used as a mode of treatment for many ailments and to restore health and vigor to many systems of the body. As a result, more and more people are rediscovering the long term therapeutic benefits of massage therapy.

The word massage is derived from the Greek word ‘massier’ which means to knead. During massage, the therapist applies touch, pressure, force and range of motion techniques that pull, lift, rub and compress the muscles in the body, to repair, stimulate and enhance its various systems. For example;

A human being carries one -half of the weight of his body in the form of muscle tissue. One-fourth of the blood supply circulates in the muscles. When one receives massage treatment, the muscles get regenerated and are then capable of holding half of the blood supply. Massage thus provides additional nourishment to feed the muscular tissue, helping them to grow strong. Other benefits include enhanced blood circulation and metabolic processes, increased flexibility, and a reduction in muscle soreness, tension, and swelling.

Therapeutic effects are shown throughout the nervous system as well, stimulating nerves activate a reflex arc which increases the diameter of the blood vessels and reduces blood pressure.

The lymphatic system, which plays a key role in the body’s defense against disease, is also affected by massage therapy’s demonstrated ability to increase lymph circulation and lessen lymphodema.

Additionally, it quickens the elimination of poisons and waste material from the body through the various eliminative organs such as the lungs, skin, kidneys and bowels, strengthens respiratory muscles, increases circulation and relaxes and tones the nervous system of chest, heart and lungs resulting in a decreased respiration rate.

The effects of massage on the skin include increased temperature and sebaceous gland activity, reduction of scar tissue, softening of facial lines and wrinkles, and decreased dryness and overall improvement of the condition of skin. Regular massage and keeping the body well lubricated during pregnancy can also prevent stretch marks.

This is just the beginning of a long list of beneficial effects that massage has upon the body, mind and spirit. So, for those of you who have never experienced massage, I encourage you to try it! You will undoubtedly be impressed by its many therapeutic benefits and will look forward to experiencing it as a vital routine for staying healthy!

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