

Therapeutic Massage Has Many Health Benefits

Therapeutic massage is an age-old remedy and health practice. It is found in all major civilizations past and present. From the ancient Greek gymnasias and Roman baths to modern day spas and health clubs, massage has been recognized for its health enhancing effects.

The healing systems of many cultures, including our own use hands-on therapy to soothe aches and pains and facilitate the body's own healing powers.

From infancy to old age, massage has been found to enhance general health and well-being. Therapeutic massage has many applications and variations.

Because it is used for health

promotion as well as for its curative aspect, it can truthfully be said, "If you have a body, you can benefit from the therapeutic massage."

Many of the therapeutic effects of massage recognized by personal and clinical experience over the years have been supported by scientific research. In addition to the commonly known benefits of relaxation, improved circulation, and relief for muscle tension, new application for therapeutic massage are surfacing in areas related to mental and emotional well-being, infant care, aging, and other special situations. Exciting new discoveries link touch in general, and therapeutic massage in particular to improved immune system functioning.

(The Bodywork Knowledgebase; Practitioner's Desk Reference, Volume 1 (1959-1988), Compiled by Richard van Why, 1989)

Therapeutic massage can be an important component of your health maintenance or wellness plan. It helps keep the body and mind functioning optimally.

- Promotes well-nourished and healthy skin

- Improves circulation of blood and lymph

- Relaxes muscles and improves joint mobility

- Encourages general relaxation

- Improves immune system functioning

- Improves energy flow

Therapeutic massage can help relieve certain common physical problems, and help bring the body back to optimal functioning.

- General muscular tension and aches

- Tension headaches

- Muscular back pain

- Poor circulation

- Stress and anxiety

Therapeutic massage can be an important adjunct to a fitness or sports program, helping you achieve your performance goals with minimum injury and pain.

- Relieves tired and sore muscles

- Helps improve flexibility

- Relaxes tight muscles

- Speeds recovery from strenuous physical exertion

- Reduces the anxiety of athletic competition

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.

- Enhances tissue elasticity and joint flexibility

- Improves blood and lymph

circulation

- Promotes healthy vibrant skin

- Improves immune system functioning

- Relieves muscle aches and stiffness

Therapeutic massage helps balance the effects of stress in our lives, and avoid stress related disease and dysfunction.

- Triggers the Relaxation Response

- Relaxes tense muscles

- Reduces anxiety level

- Normalizes blocked energy flow

- Improves immune system functioning

- Restores a calm mind and feeling of well-being

Therapeutic massage can help in certain temporary or long-term situations which cause unique physical and mental challenges.

- For mothers-to-be during pregnancy

- For infants, especially premature and other developmentally challenged babies

- For the disabled, especially those in wheelchairs and others with challenging orthopedic conditions

- For the elderly

Therapeutic massage is frequently used to enhance the beneficial effects of other types of health care.

- Physical and Occupational Therapy

- Chiropractic

- Psychotherapy

Especially Beneficial For...

Care-givers - for those who care for others, for example: mothers and fathers, teachers, recreation leaders, daycare workers, nurses, and health care workers of all kinds.

Physical workers - for those who stress their bodies in their work or

trade, for example: construction workers, domestic and custodial personnel, truck drivers, postal workers, plumbers, electricians, painters, professional athletes, dancers, and musicians.

Desk workers - for those whose work involves long hours sitting at a desk using a computer, or talking on the telephone; or at a bench assembling parts, fixing things, or creating works of art.

Travelers - for those spending long hours sitting in an automobile, train or airplane, for example: commuters, sales people, business travelers, and vacationers.

Which Approach is Best for You?

There are several popular approaches or styles of therapeutic massage. Each one has its own unique character, focus, techniques, and theoretical base. Some are more effective for certain goals than others. How do you know which one is best for you?

Classic European massage is very versatile and forms the basis of many other approaches. Swedish and Russian styles are most common and contain the familiar long strokes, kneading, vibration, friction, and percussion techniques.

It can be applied effectively for general relaxation, general health enhancement, sports massage, injury recovery and rehabilitation, and many other purposes.

Massage and bodywork forms of Asian origin include amma, acupressure, and shiatsu. These Asian styles are generally focused on energy flow according to the Chinese medical model. In acupressure and shiatsu the characteristic technique is finger pressure on individual points.

The Ayurvedic medical model from India gives rise to other forms of body therapy, which incorporate theories of yoga and chakra energy flow. These are also used effectively for relaxation, general health enhancement, and remedial work.

In addition to the basic approaches described above, other forms of therapeutic massage and body therapies are available. Most experienced massage therapists use an eclectic approach and combine different forms of therapeutic massage in their sessions. Ask your massage therapist if the approach is appropriate for your health goals.

Make Exercise Fun

Year in, year out, scores of people make getting in shape their New Year's Resolution.

But after a few weeks, many of those same people are back to their old behaviors, leaving the gym behind for some post-work couch time.

There's a host of things you can do to turn your exercise regimen from something you dread to something you really appreciate and look forward to.

- Get a partner: Many people find that working out with a partner is a good way to stay on schedule and stay motivated.

Also, going to the gym with a friend can be more enjoyable because you can joke around between sets or just talk as if you were sitting on the couch watching a movie.

- Mix things up: If your workouts don't involve isolating specific muscles each day (where Monday you'll work solely triceps and back, Tuesday legs and chest, etc.) but instead are more general and less strenuous, then you're bound to

get bored.

- Play sports: Workouts don't need to just include dumbbells and situps. If your office has a company softball team, join it.

Or if there's a local basketball league you can join, consider that as well. Also, getting out in the fresh air can help improve your state of mind.

- Go outdoors: Many state parks have workout stations along the trails you can walk.

While these don't include weights, they have stations for pull-ups, situps, stretching your legs, etc.

And if you're on trails, keep in mind the walk itself is great exercise, particularly if the trails feature some hills to climb. Again, the fresh air can be very rejuvenating as well.

- Incorporate music: Many exercise enthusiasts find that music is a perfect complement to their workouts. Time tends to go by a lot faster when you're listening to music.

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