

Sojourn Massage Newsletter

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Making the Most of Your Massage

How to Prolong the Benefits of Bodywork

Barbara Hey

A massage works in wonderful ways, easing stress and pain, calming the nervous system, increasing circulation, loosening tight muscles, stimulating internal organs, and enhancing skin. The multiplicity of physiological responses sends a simple, clear message to the mind: Massage feels good. Of course, you want to hold on to that just-had-a-massage feeling -- total body relaxation, muscles relaxed and at ease, and fluid movement restored -- for as long as possible.

But how long that bliss lasts depends on the state of your body. If you're suffering from chronic pain or recovering from injury, then it may take more sessions and perhaps different

Massage Frequency

How often you receive massage depends on why you're seeking massage. In dealing with the general tension of everyday commutes, computer work, and time demands, a monthly massage may be enough to sustain you. On the other hand, if you're seeking massage for chronic pain, you may need regular treatments every week or two. Or if you're addressing an acute injury or dealing with high levels of stress, you may need more frequent sessions. Your situation will dictate the optimum time between treatments, and your practitioner will work with you to determine the best course of action.



The more often you receive massage, the more therapeutic it becomes.

modalities before optimal health is restored.

If massage is part of your regular health regimen, then it's more likely the effects will endure. In other words, the effects of massage are cumulative, like any healthy habit. The more often you get a massage, the greater and longer-lasting the benefits.

"You need to consider how you felt before the session and how you felt after, and then look at how long you maintain that," says Pieter Sommen, the chair of the eastern department in the Swedish Institute School of Massage Therapy in New York.

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*If we could see
the miracle of a
single flower
clearly, our
whole life
would change.*

-- Buddha

Office Hours and Contact

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In general, experts say "regular" is preferable, but how regular depends on your situation. While daily massage would be delightful, practical considerations such as cost, time, and physical need likely determine the frequency of treatments. "It's best to maintain a schedule," says Eeris Kallil, CMT, a shiatsu instructor at the Boulder College of Massage Therapy in Colorado. "That way the body becomes conditioned and prepared for session at specific intervals."

Maintenance

Whether you get a massage weekly, monthly, or just every once in a while, the following habits can maximize and extend the afterglow of treatment.

WATER

One bit of advice you'll hear over and over again is to drink plenty of water after a massage. Bodywork -- no matter the particular modality -- releases toxins, such as lactic acid and carbonic acid, that need to be flushed from the body. Massage also promotes circulation, increasing blood flow and oxygen and stimulating the lymphatic system, which helps rid the body of pathogens. After-massage hydration supports these functions, helping to eliminate released impurities, sooner rather than later.

STRETCHING

Another helpful habit is stretching between massages to maintain joint mobility, prevent muscles from tightening up again, and keeping the life energy flowing. This may mean doing yoga or whatever specific or full-body stretches suggested by your practitioner. After a shiatsu session, for example, your practitioner may recommend "makko-ho" stretches, a series of six exercises designed to keep energy circulating. "This series of stretches take anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes a day, but really help keep the chi flowing through the body," says Kallil.

EXERCISE

Working out can also help maintain the benefits of massage, and this habit should be continually cultivated. However, if you're receiving massage therapy to help speed muscle strain recovery, you may need to ease up on

the exercise for a while and give the body time to heal -- particularly if you're recovering from a strenuous body-pummeling training regimen. "You don't want to over-work your body," says Kallil. That is, if running is taking a toll, try something more gentle and meditative such as swimming, walking, or tai chi.

BODY AWARENESS

After a massage, respect how your body feels. If your body seems to ask for rest, give in to that demand. This may mean backing off the to-do list, taking it easy, moving slower, and perhaps doing less for a while. And don't allow yourself to get fatigued because it will undermine the effects of massage. Get sufficient sleep to allow the body to absorb the effects and regain vitality.

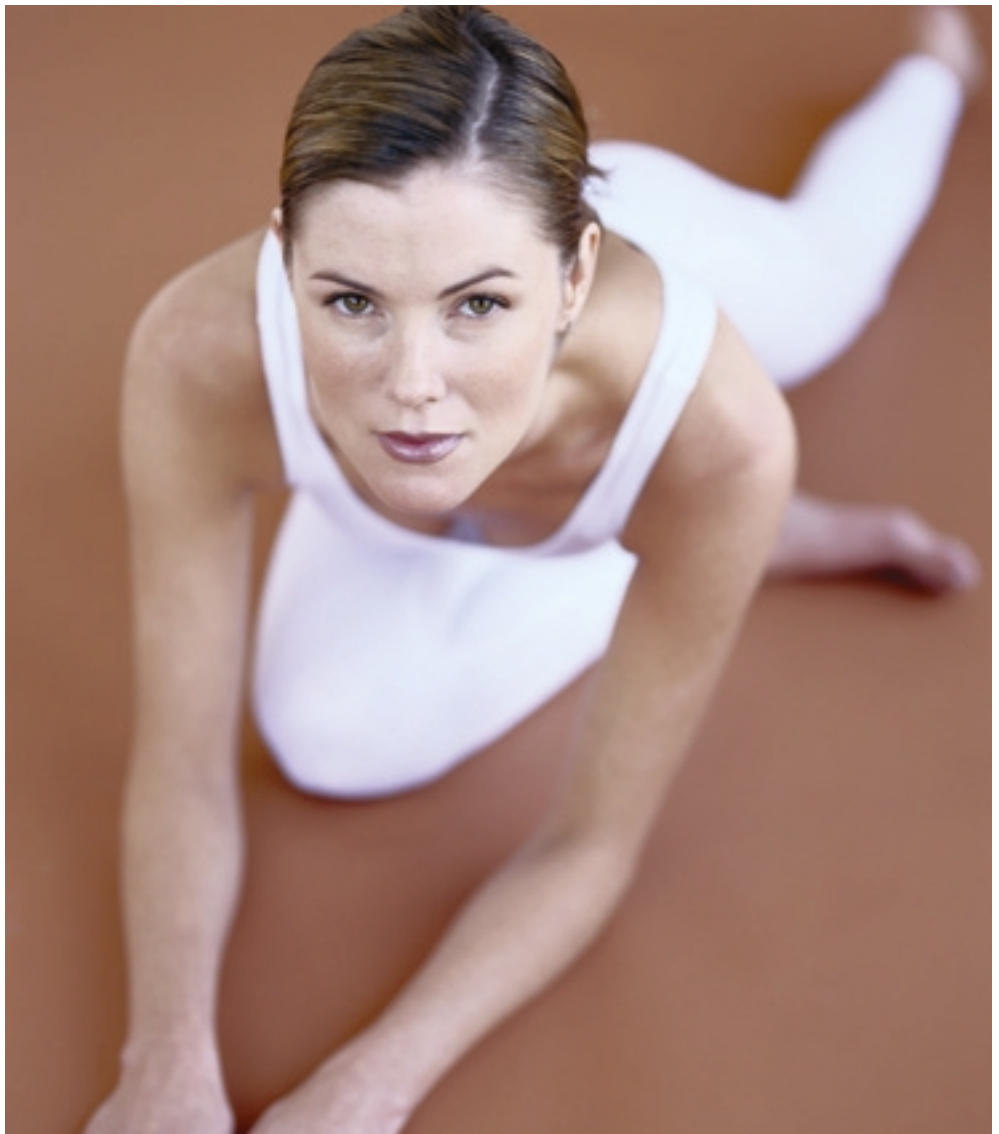
DIET

Finally, since you've just rid the body of

toxins, support the body's renewed state by adhering to a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables, which will continue the detoxification process. Lay off the espresso and all adrenaline-challenges for a time -- which would short-circuit relaxation anyway -- and enjoy the calm.

The benefits of massage are many, including: increasing circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients throughout the body; stimulating lymph flow and boosting immunity; relaxing overused or tight muscles; increasing joint mobility and range of motion; reducing recovery time after strenuous workouts or surgery; and relieving back pain and migraines, just to name a few.

By opting for a few lifestyle choices, you can extend these benefits and get the most out of your massage.



Stretching between massages helps maintain relaxed muscles, joint mobility, and energy flow.

The Wonders of Water

For Skin Health and More

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Creams, nutritional supplements, treatments, lotions, and potions. We are always looking for the next miracle product to keep skin looking healthy and young. However, there is one essential, inexpensive, and often overlooked nutrient right at your fingertips: water.

Just as a car cannot function without oil, our bodies cannot function without water. After oxygen, H₂O is the most important component of the body, responsible for 65-70 percent of its composition. And of this, 80 percent is dedicated to the skin.

Water is the medium for various enzymatic and chemical reactions in the body. It moves nutrients, hormones, antibodies, and oxygen through the blood and lymphatic systems, and it also helps form the matrix of the skin. Devoid of water, the skin becomes dehydrated, resulting in a dry, dull tone.

It's likely that the moment a person feels thirsty, mild dehydration has already set

in. To keep the complexion looking smooth and blemish-free, drink water upon waking and continue drinking it throughout the day at one- to two-hour intervals. At least six 8-oz. glasses of water should be consumed daily and more if you are exercising, perspiring, and/or in hot weather. Ideally, intake should be between ten and twelve 8-oz. glasses of water a day. One note: Don't increase water intake all at once, as the kidneys and digestive system need time to adjust. Add one 8-oz. glass every day or every second day.

What counts toward your daily water intake? Just the basics: water and herbal tea. Caffeinated beverages and alcoholic drinks are diuretics that can contribute to dehydration, requiring even more hydration after drinking.

Not only is water important for skin health, it can also play a key role in the prevention of disease. Drinking eight glasses of water a day can decrease the risk of colon cancer, bladder cancer, and potentially even breast cancer.



Water helps keep the body at optimum health.

Flax Facts

Reap the Health Benefits of This Little Seed

Flaxseed, the humble little brown seed with a nutty flavor, is a powerhouse in the nutrition world. It's able to reduce blood pressure, decrease risk of heart attacks and stroke, improve skin quality, help control blood sugar levels, reduce cholesterol, and even prevent breast and colon cancer--all in a single seed!

But what makes flax so powerful? Flaxseed contains high concentrations of alpha linoleic acid, a form of omega-3 fatty acids, which serve as the basic building blocks of cell walls. Additionally, flax is high in lignans, powerful antioxidants known for alleviating menopausal symptoms and fighting breast cancer. There are three forms of flaxseed, making it easy to incorporate into your diet.

FLAX OIL

While available in capsule form to be taken as a supplement, flax oil is best consumed as a food to get the most benefits from it. Many nutritionists often recommend purchasing the oil in small quantities, storing it in the refrigerator, and consuming a daily intake of two tablespoons. You can add a tablespoon to your morning smoothie or substitute flax oil in the vinaigrette dressing for your salad.

Flax oil breaks down to trans fats when heated, so it should never be used in cooking. While lower in lignans than other forms of flax, the oil is sometimes processed to preserve the lignans. Check the label for details.

FLAXSEEDS

Whole seeds are sure to have all the nutritional benefits of flax. Simply add these to your granola or salads for a nutty flavor. If a little tough on the teeth, grind them in a coffee grinder and sprinkle on foods. One note: raw, whole flaxseeds contain chemicals that can affect thyroid function. To get around this, simply toast the seeds in the oven for twenty minutes at 250 degrees, or limit your consumption of raw seeds to three to four tablespoons a day.

FLAX MEAL

Ground flax meal is another option to get the powerful nutritional value of flax. Add a tablespoon of it to your smoothies for extra fiber, or stir it into your oatmeal in the morning.

*Your vision will
become clear
only when you
look into your
heart. Who
looks outside,
dreams. Who
looks inside,
awakens.*

--Carl Jung

HAPPY SPRING!!

Springtime symbolizes renewal, rebirth and new possibilities. Trying new things keeps you in tune with this, so come in and try a different type of massage this spring. I offer Hot Stone Massage, Thai Massage and Raindrop Technique, or try a foot treatment or face and head massage using warm towels and cold stones to add to your current session.

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