

In the Balance

Massage news and tips for your good health

Sojourn Therapeutic Massage

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Winter Issue

stress relief

reduced muscle tension

pain relief

more restful sleep

improved circulation

healthier joints

improved posture

quicker recovery from illness and injury

fewer headaches

restored humor

increased energy

improved outlook on life

Massage and health care

The past and present of healing touch

Massage and other touch therapies have been around a long time. Ancient cultures including the Chinese, East Indians, and Greeks used therapeutic massage for stress and pain relief. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, wrote in the 5th century B.C., “the physician must be experienced in many things, but assuredly also in rubbing.”

Modern history

In more modern times, Florence Nightingale established battlefield nursing care in the mid-19th century, initiating the era of nursing as a profession. Massage was included in her training school for nurses.

Around the same time that Florence Nightingale was ministering to soldiers, massage began to be studied in Russia. It wasn't until after World War II, however, when pharmaceuticals were in short supply in that country, that Russian doctors began researching in earnest the benefits of using natural healing, including massage. They developed a form of injury treatment massage which is still studied and provided as a standard treatment in hospitals. Massage practitioners in Russia are considered medical professionals on par with physicians.

In the West

In the U.S. more and more people including health care professionals are turning to massage to complement mainstream health care. According to a recent survey by the mammoth HMO, Group Health Cooperative, 74 percent of physicians, nurses and physicians assistants found massage to be always or usually effective for the purpose it was prescribed.



Skilled touch can help everyone, no matter what their condition.

Clinical massage: injury treatment and more

Classic or Swedish massage, acupressure, Reiki, reflexology and craniosacral therapy are becoming more widely available in clinical settings to relieve the discomforts of injuries, arthritis, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, diabetes and recovery from strokes and surgery. Bodywork techniques have also been shown to alleviate the side-effects of cancer treatments, including pain, nausea and anxiety.

Interestingly, research is also showing that massage reduces stress, pain and insomnia among primary caregivers of the ill. Research and experience seems to be pointing to what many of us who receive massage know intuitively—skilled touch is for everybody, no matter who or where they are. ~



Self-care for TMJD

Reduce tension in your jaw and face

Stress, whiplash, poor posture—these are some of the contributors to Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMJD). But no matter what caused it, if you suffer from TMJD, you may at times need help to reduce the pain and tension in your jaw, face, neck and shoulders. Massage can reduce tightness and improve range of motion to these areas. With regular massage, headaches caused by TMJD can be reduced, contracted tissues can be lengthened, and posture improved. See the tips below to use between massage sessions.

Tension-busting tips

1. Decrease stress levels with regular exercise, yoga, tai chi, meditation, or by stretching frequently at work.
2. Avoid chewing gum, or eating crunchy foods.
3. To relieve tension and increase circulation, apply heat to your face or neck with hot, wet towels, a heating pad or a microwave heat pack.
4. To numb pain, apply cold with an ice bag or with a bag of frozen peas. Use a cloth between the bag and your skin, and don't exceed 15 minutes.
5. Try these jaw exercises daily:



Open and close your mouth as widely as possible, 10 to 20 times.



Now bring your tongue to the roof of your mouth. Keep it there while you open and close your mouth 10 to 20 times.



If you find it difficult to open your mouth widely, you can gradually increase the range of motion in your jaw. Insert a wine cork between your teeth. If that's uncomfortable, slice it in half, and hold that piece between your teeth. Try it for a minute or two every day to see if you can increase your range. ~

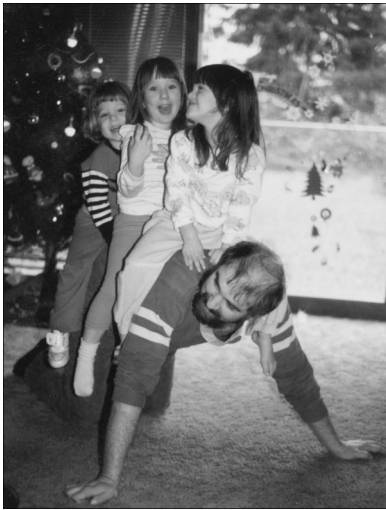


Herbs like lavender, clove, thyme and eucalyptus help relieve pain and tension.

Make your own heat pack

Herbs and grains help relax

Fill a sock, cloth bag or small pillow case with grains such as rice or buckwheat, and herbs or spices like lavender, clove, eucalyptus or thyme. Sew or tie off the end, and heat for two to three minutes in the microwave according your heat preference. Experiment so that it is warm enough to radiate heat at least 10 minutes and cool enough to be placed directly on the skin. Use on any painful or tight area, such as the neck, shoulders or low back. The relaxing, pain-relieving qualities of the herbs join with the lingering heat of the grain to help you let go, breathe deeply and rejuvenate. ~



Laughter reduces stress

Laugh and feel better!

As the saying goes, laughter is the best medicine. Laughter can reduce the effects of stress and contribute to healing. It helps us pull back from our problems and gain a larger perspective.

Research at California's Loma Linda Medical Center showed that laughter decreased levels of cortisol and epinephrine, the so-called "stress hormones" associated with increases in heart rate and blood pressure. "Good" hormones such as endorphins, one of the beneficial chemicals released in exercise, increased with laughter.

Another study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that the skin welts of allergy patients shrank after watching Charlie Chaplin movies. So laugh, relax and be well! ~

The human race has only one really effective weapon and that's laughter. The moment it arises, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.

—Mark Twain

Keeping a pain log

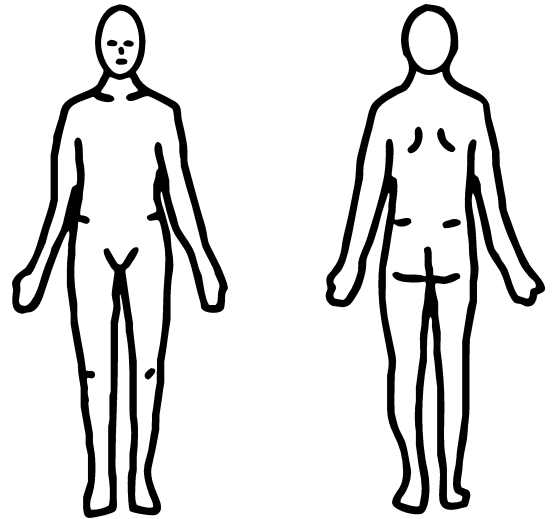
Track your symptoms

If you want to get a better idea of why you hurt, you may want to track your pain and discomfort levels, where you hurt, and what makes you feel better.

1. Show on the drawings to the right where you feel pain now and/or have felt pain since your last massage.
2. Do you often feel pain in this area? _____
3. On a pain scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate your pain? (One is no pain, ten is extreme pain.)

4. How do you describe your pain (dull, nagging, driving, pins and needles, stabbing, etc.)?

5. What activities bring on pain? _____
6. What seems to reduce your pain? _____
7. What other kinds of stress or discomfort are you feeling? _____
8. What seems to make your symptoms worse? _____
9. What have you noticed makes your symptoms better? _____
10. Was your pain and stress significantly reduced after your last massage session? _____
11. What has your activity level been since your last massage? _____
12. How do you feel after exercising? Working? Sleeping? _____
13. What other types of treatment have you had for your pain/stress since your last massage? Did they help? _____



► Here's an example of a log that can get you started tracking your symptoms. Complete it once or twice a week for 3 or 4 weeks in a row. Then compare and share the results with the health care practitioners you are seeing for pain reduction.

Your newsletter on massage! See inside:

- Massage and health care
- Self-care for TMJD
- Make your own heat pack
- Laughter reduces stress
- Keeping a pain log

*Get your sweetheart
something sweet ...*



...a massage!

The cumulative effects of massage

Reduce pain from chronic conditions

Aah...you finally got in for your massage. As you relaxed, your headache or low-back pain receded. You also may have noticed your anxieties weren't hammering at you like they were when the massage began.

Like many of us, you may have experienced those times when a single massage provided amazing, short-term relief from pain or stress. But as you returned to your normal activities, the chronic pain and tension came creeping back over time, contributing to headaches or flare ups of fibromyalgia, TMJD or old injuries.

Your chronic discomforts and conditions can actually improve long-term with a series of massage sessions. With regular massage, you may also notice that you don't feel the effects of excess stress as much or that, due to increased body awareness, you use your body in ways that cause less strain. You may observe that your old pain patterns aren't kicking in to the degree that they used to. Gradually, you may enjoy an increased sense of overall well-being and the awareness of what it feels like to be truly relaxed.

Let massage work for you. By making it a regular part of your life you can experience a decrease in chronic pain and tension, and a calmer state of mind. ☺