

In the Balance

Massage news and tips for your good health

Sojourn Therapeutic Massage

815-741-9741

Spring 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

Stretching for the desk bound

Especially for your neck and shoulders

If you sit at a desk all day, you may ask for extra attention to neck and shoulders when you get a massage. Massage is wonderful! But it may also help to take short breaks at work to relieve tension and prevent injury. Try stretching frequently, flexing tight joints and shaking out tense limbs.

When practicing your stretches, remember these points.

- Stretch to a place you feel pull, but not pain. Don't bounce.
- Hold the stretch for 10 seconds to increase circulation, 30-60 seconds to lengthen a muscle.
- Breathe easily and slowly while holding the stretch. Empty your lungs completely when you exhale. Breathing fully can get more oxygen to your muscles and help prevent straining.
- If you have had a recent injury or surgery, or if you feel a sharp pain when stretching, consult your primary health care practitioner before continuing any stretching program.



To relieve tension from desk work, try taking frequent breaks to stretch and flex.

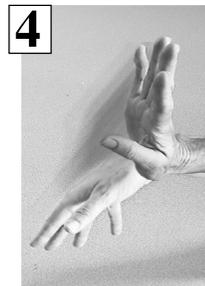
1. For neck tension, let your head fall forward as you exhale. Inhale and very slowly roll your head to the right until you are looking straight in front of you. Exhale and roll your head to your chest. Inhale and roll your head to your left shoulder. Exhale and return to the chest. Continue these movements, slowly and easily, for one to five minutes. Important: never roll your head behind your shoulder.



2. To stretch your whole spine, raise your arms over your head. Stretch your right arm toward the ceiling, hold and relax. Then repeat with your left arm. Breathe slowly, exhaling completely as you stretch. Repeat several times. If you have high blood pressure, skip this one.



3. For joint mobility, stretch one leg in front of you and roll your ankle in circles, both directions. Repeat on the other side. Then, with your arms at your sides, roll your wrists one way, then the other.



4. As if you had a piece of tape stuck to your fingers, shake your arms and hands vigorously to get it off. Shake for 30 seconds and feel the energy move through your limbs.
5. For shoulder tension, clasp your hands behind your head with your elbows to the side. Exhale and very slowly twist your head and torso to the right. Hold for a moment, inhale and turn back to center. Then exhale, turn to the left, and return to center. Repeat 5 times each direction.

6. To ease back tension, push your chair away from the desk. Stretch both arms forward and rest your hands on the desk. Exhale and lower your head while arching your back. Relax for a moment with your head down, then inhale and raise your head and chest, curving your back in the other direction. Stretch several times this way, breathing slowly and completely.



Wear and tear on the job

Early treatment prevents serious injury

Pain and dysfunction due to repetitive activities on the job, also known as repetitive stress injuries (RSI), have been impacting people for centuries. Anyone who uses their arms and hands on the job are at risk. Examples include estheticians and hairdressers who can't comb their own hair at the end of the day, the checkout clerk who can't get a sweater over his head, the dentist who has to cut back or retire because of weakness and pain in the arms. Now, of course, RSI has become a problem for millions who work long days and weeks at the computer keyboard.

Do you have RSI?

Tennis elbow and carpal tunnel syndrome are well-known examples of RSI. You may also fit the description if you have chronic muscle spasms in the upper back and neck, stiff and painful shoulders, or tingling in your arms or hands. If you have pain, tightness, or weakness in these areas, continuing repetitive movements may cause a serious injury, and extended loss of work time. Early treatment is essential. Even if you are just beginning to notice tingling, numbness or weakness in these areas, see your health care provider right away.

How massage helps

Schedule regular massage sessions. Techniques like trigger-point therapy and deep tissue massage can help prevent further injury by stretching tight muscles, and help to heal strains and other injuries by flushing toxins that cause inflammation as well as bringing in healing nutrients and pain relieving hormones to the tissues. Ask for instructions in changing postural habits at work, and for stretching exercises to limber up and relieve tension. ~



Repetitive movements on the job can lead to serious injury.

Bust work stress

Tips to feel better and work better

Letting stress build up at work can lead to tension and irritability and can even cause you to dislike an otherwise interesting job. Here are some suggestions to better manage the effects of stress.

- **Pace yourself.** Keep your expectations of yourself and co-workers realistic and don't make a habit of putting in extra hours. If you find yourself trying to meet unrealistic expectations, learn to distance yourself emotionally or take up a physically demanding sport.
- **Set boundaries.** Accept that you can only do so much and give yourself wholeheartedly to that. Be willing to say "no."
- **Take breaks to get away.** Don't ignore your coffee break. If you don't drink coffee, take a brisk walk or do a few simple stretches.
- **Take time for yourself to review and evaluate the big picture.** Listen to your inner voice about what's important and what's not.
- **Laugh.** Find the humor in your life. Watch funny movies and be willing to laugh at yourself. ~



Taking breaks and setting boundaries can help you manage stress at work.

Massage erases pain

How does it work?

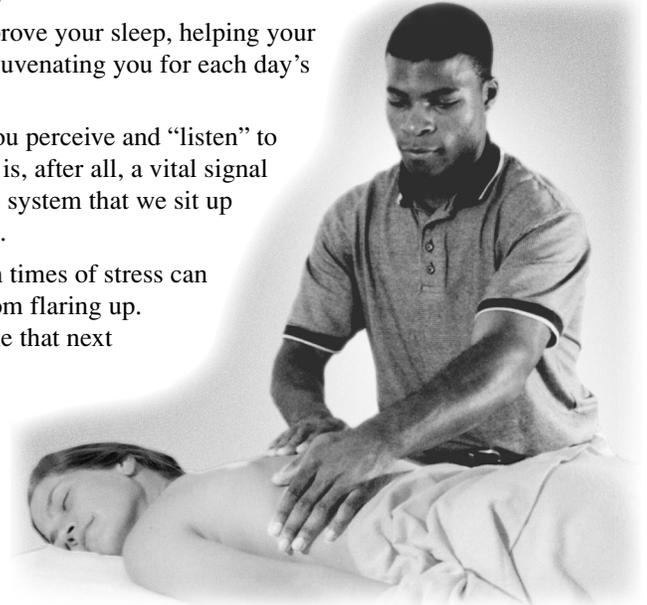
You know how much better you feel after a massage. How does it work?

- Massage stimulates release of natural pain-relievers such as endorphins.
- Massage stretches tight muscles and sends messages to the nervous system to relax.
- Massage increases circulation, which flushes irritating waste products and floods contracted muscles with healing oxygen and nutrients.
- Massage releases trigger points, highly irritable spots that feel like lumps or knots, that refer uncomfortable sensations to other parts of the body.
- Massage softens contracted muscles and their connective tissue coverings, called fascia. As a result, tension and spasms are often relieved.
- Massage helps you regain energy and normal

movement. Feeling good will make you want to exercise, regaining your most important means for maintaining good circulation.

- Massage can improve your sleep, helping your body heal and rejuvenating you for each day's challenges.
- Massage helps you perceive and “listen” to your pain, which is, after all, a vital signal from our nervous system that we sit up and pay attention.

Follow-up massage in times of stress can help keep old pain from flaring up. Remember to schedule that next massage! ~



Save your back

Correct body posture and mechanics prevent injury

The muscles, ligaments, and discs of your back do a big job, supporting your spine and moving the weight of your body. Good posture, exercise, and correct body mechanics help keep it flexible and strong.

How can you protect your back? Move with a little thought. Here are some tips to help you move correctly.

Support yourself well.

Spread your feet shoulder width apart for stability. Stand evenly on your two feet. Practice feeling your center of gravity in your abdomen. Many people try to move from their upper bodies, which is less efficient than moving from your pelvis, hips, and abdomen.

Use caution when lifting or reaching.

Follow these guidelines when lifting or reaching. ~



- 1** Stand close to a load to pick it up; squat and use your legs to lift it, keeping your back straight and the object close to your body.



- 2** Kneel down on one knee to retrieve something from the floor.



- 3** When reaching for an object overhead, keep your shoulders and hips facing it—don't twist.

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Your newsletter on massage! See inside:

- Stretching for the desk bound
- Preventing work injuries
- Tips to combat work stress
- Save your back
- How massage erases pain

Remember!

Mother's Day

Secretary's Day

Father's Day

Graduation

Wedding or
Baby Showers

Give the gift of **MASSAGE**

Easy to give ...

Easy to receive!



Massage reduces low-back pain

A clinical trial at the Center for Health Studies, Group Health Seattle, showed massage produced a “substantial and persistent benefit” for low back pain sufferers during the 10 week study. The use of pain medications went down as well. “The magnitude of this effect was quite surprising. Function is not an easy thing to improve in people with chronic back pain,” said Daniel Cherkin, Ph.D and acting director of the Center. ~

In the future, let's hope for a TV commercial that says, “Stay in touch with your feelings, keep in touch with a loved one, be treated by a massage therapist, and be well.

*—Bernie S. Siegel, MD. *Massage Therapy Journal**