

Therapeutic Massage by Lucy --Newsletter--

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Massage Multiplied

Benefits of Massage Improve with Frequency

Karrie Osborn

What kind of massage client are you? Do you make an appointment after someone has given you a massage gift certificate? Do you try to get in every now and then for a stress-relieving tune-up? Or do you see your therapist religiously--once a week, every three weeks, once a month?

While getting a massage--regardless of how often--is incredibly beneficial to your body and mind, getting frequent massage treatments is even more powerful as a healthcare ally.

"People who get massage regularly demonstrate a reduction in pain and muscular tension and an improvement in posture," says Anne Williams, author

Stress Killer

One way in which frequent massage can improve our quality of life is by alleviating stress. Experts say most disease is stress-related, and nothing ages us faster--inside or out--than the effects of stress. As stress-related diseases continue to claim more lives every year, the increasingly deadly role stress plays in modern-day life is painfully clear.

Massage is a great way to take charge and reverse the situation. Mary Beth Braun and Stephanie Simonson, authors of *Introduction to Massage Therapy* (Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2007), explain the benefits of massage

"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."

-Henry D. Thoreau



Regularly scheduled massage has proven a powerful ally in health and wellness.

of *Spa Bodywork: A Guide for Massage Therapists* (Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2006).

"People regularly make a commitment to fitness. People regularly make a commitment to changing their diet. The difference they'd experience if they regularly made a commitment to massage is mind-blowing," she says.

therapy in the simplest of terms: "Healing input influences healing output." They note that frequent massage can reduce the accumulation of stress and improve overall health. "The benefits of massage are cumulative," they write.

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Office Hours and Contact

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This being the case, it only makes sense that those aches and pains you see your massage therapist for might disappear faster, stay away longer, or even go away altogether with more frequent visits. Stress might never reach those physiologically detrimental levels where the immune system is suppressed or the nervous system is sent into an alarm state if you are able to receive stress-relieving bodywork with some consistency. Not only would your body benefit by regularly unleashing its aches and pains instead of adapting to them, but your mind would have time to wash away the stresses of a life lived in overdrive. Both are critical pieces for living well.

Experts say the body and mind can learn to live more calmly, more efficiently, and more healthfully when frequent massage shows the way. That makes for a healthier whole, allowing us to continue to live life at its fullest, even as we deal with each new stress or challenge.

Preventive Measures

In so many ways, massage is preventive health care. Yes, it can address injuries, scar tissue, and chronic pain, as well as provide relief for cancer patients and reduce hospitalization for premature babies, among many other valuable benefits (go to Massagetherapy.com for more information on the myriad benefits of massage). But when the healthy, and trying-to-be-healthy, among us seek out massage on a regular basis, it helps us live a proactively healthier life.

Since bodywork influences every system in the body, there are enormous possibilities created by increasing the frequency in which you address those systems. It's best to discuss your session goals with your massage therapist and together devise a plan of frequency that meets your needs, while taking into account your therapist's best advice.

Body Awareness

According to Benny Vaughn, sports massage expert and owner of Athletic Therapy Center in Fort Worth, Texas, one of the benefits of consistent and regular massage therapy is better flexibility. "This happens because regular and structured touch stimulus enhances the nervous system's sensory and spatial processing capacity," he says.

"That is, the person becomes more aware of their body's movement in space and becomes more aware of tightness or pain long before it reaches a critical point of mechanical dysfunction."

Quite simply, frequent massage puts you more in tune with your body. "The consistency of massage therapy over time creates a cumulative stress reduction effect," Vaughn says. "The person becomes acutely aware of stress within their body long before it can create stress-driven damage."

He says the consistency of receiving regular massage therapy has the potential to create a cumulative wellness effect. "Ultimately when one feels good, our whole being follows suit on all other levels--i.e., decision-making is better, processing life events is better, and being happy is easier when you are not in pain or feeling 'heavy' or 'tight.'"

Williams says she's certain people's lives would be changed if they could schedule massage and bodywork more frequently. "I encourage clients to commit to getting massage once a week for a month and then evaluate the results they get," she says. "I guarantee they will become massage enthusiasts for life."

Massage Can...

- Alleviate low-back pain and increase range of motion.
- Create body self-awareness.
- Improve muscle tone and stimulate their nerve supply.
- Improve elasticity of skin and promote skin rejuvenation.
- Improve sleep and calm the mind.
- Increase endorphin and serotonin production.
- Reduce edema, as well as joint inflammation.
- Release negative holding patterns from previous injuries.



A consistent massage routine helps you manage stress before it causes illness.

Keeping Your Back Healthy

Tips to Avoid Lasting Pain

Chances are good that, at some point in your life, you will have back pain. In fact, 70-85 percent of Americans will experience back pain at some point in their lives. But even with those odds, there are still several ways to minimize your risk and give yourself the best chance to live pain-free.

Several factors can cause back pain, including stress, poor posture, bad ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more.

With all of these potential causes lurking, it's important to look at behaviors that can help you prevent and avoid back pain before it starts. Here are a few simple healthy back tips from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:

- Stretch and warm tissues before exercise or other strenuous activities.
- Practice good posture. Avoid slouching when sitting or standing.

--When standing, keep your weight balanced on both feet.

--Follow good ergonomics in the workplace. When sitting for long periods of time, rest your feet on a foot support. Make sure your chair and work surfaces are at the proper height. Get up and move around in between long sitting stints.

--Avoid high-heeled shoes.

--Watch your weight. Excess weight, especially around the waist, can put undue stress on lower back muscles.

--Exercise. Core strengthening moves, especially, will also benefit your back.

--Don't lift items that are heavier than you can handle. Remember to lift with your knees, not your back. Pull in your stomach muscles, keep your head down and in line with your straight back, and do not twist when lifting.

--Get a massage. Using therapeutic bodywork can melt pain-inducing stress away from your back and the rest of your body.



Massage is a great way to beat back pain.

The Case for Chocolate

New Studies Show Health Benefits

It's not like we need a specific reason to eat chocolate, but it doesn't hurt that studies are finding increasing health benefits associated with the popular indulgence. While chocolate is high in sugar and saturated fat, it does contain chemical compounds with proven benefits, so enjoy--in moderation--and expect to reap some of these rewards.

Improved Heart Health

A study in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that women over 70 who ate chocolate at least once a week were 35 percent less likely to suffer from heart disease during the survey period. Researchers suspect that the flavonoids found in chocolate, which are known to reduce blood pressure, likely improve overall cardiovascular health.

Reduced Liver Strain

These same flavonoids in dark chocolate that help decrease blood pressure can also reduce post-meal abdominal blood pressure spikes that strain the liver by widening and relaxing blood cells. A Spanish study of patients with end-stage liver disease showed that dark chocolate helped reduce some of the risks associated with conditions like cirrhosis.

Safer Pregnancy

Dark chocolate has been shown to help pregnant women avoid preeclampsia--a significant complication where blood pressure spikes to dangerous levels--by nearly 40 percent when consumed five times a week. Dark chocolate is especially rich in theobromine, which relaxes

muscles and dilates blood vessels. As an additional benefit, it also seems to improve circulation in the placenta.

Increased Endurance

Research out of the University of California, San Diego, demonstrated that mice given epicatechin, a flavonoid found in dark chocolate, could run for 50 percent longer than those who only drank water. The mice also grew new capillaries and mitochondria in their muscles, changes that explain their enhanced endurance capacity. Unfortunately, perhaps, for chocolate lovers, is that researchers say just one-sixth of 1 ounce of chocolate each day is the ideal serving size to receive this benefit.

"Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Hello & happy Winter! Now we're in the cold time of year. This makes some people happy & some sad. Your reaction is entirely your choice. The older I get, the faster time goes by, so I have learned to be happy about changes & seasons. Savor every moment of your life, whether a hot or cold season is upon you, because all seasons have their own beauty & memories to keep in your heart.

Winter holiday time can often be more active than Summer - especially if it's >100 degrees outside! Since most of us have all this running around to do - headaches happen & bodies scream loudly. So take care of the soft tissues that you live in. Come see me for aches & pains, to calm down & relax, or simply to chill out & get your ears down from your shoulders. Be nice to yourself. And you might consider giving bodywork sessions as presents. Gift certificates are a thoughtful present for anyone & are always available.

And don't forget skin care during the cold weather. People often don't consider that you still have to stay hydrated (drink water) & put lotion or moisturizer on your skin (makes you feel much more comfortable in bulky clothes). Heat being on in all the buildings tends to dry our bodies out, but this is fixable! Try to think 'happy thoughts' & find your smile to share! Smiles & hugs always, Lucy :-)

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