

# Massage & Wellness

November 2008 Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## The Benefits of Massage

### Bodywork Goes Beyond Relaxation

As you lie on the table under crisp, fresh sheets, hushed music draws you into the moment. The smell of sage fills the air and you hear the gentle sound of massage oil being warmed in your therapist's hands. Once the session gets underway, the daily stressors and aching muscles fade into an oblivious 60 minutes of relief, and all you can comprehend right now is not wanting it to end.

But what if that hour of massage did more for you than just take the pressures of the day away? What if that gentle, Swedish massage helped you combat cancer? What if bodywork helped you recover from a strained hamstring in half the time? What if your sleep,

cultures. Touching is a natural human reaction to pain and stress, and for conveying compassion and support. When you bump your head or have a sore calf, the natural response is to rub it to feel better. The same was true of our earliest ancestors.

Healers throughout time and throughout the world have instinctually and independently developed a wide range of therapeutic techniques using touch. Many are still in use today, and with good reason. We now have scientific proof of the benefits of massage -- benefits ranging from treating chronic diseases and injuries to alleviating the growing tensions of our modern lifestyles. Having a massage does more

*Do not protect yourself by a fence, but rather by your friends.*

-Czech Proverb



Along with easing stress -- the No. 1 cause of disease -- massage has a long list of benefits.

digestion, and mood all improved with massage and bodywork? What if these weren't just "what if's"?

Evidence is showing that the more massage you can allow yourself, the better you'll feel. Here's why:

Massage as a healing tool has been around for thousands of years in many

than just relax your body and mind -- there are specific physiological and psychological changes that occur, and even more so when massage is utilized as a preventative, frequent therapy and not simply mere luxury. Massage not only feels good, but it can cure what ails you.

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#### Office Hours and Contact

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## The Fallout of Stress

Experts estimate that 80 percent to 90 percent of disease is stress-related. Massage and bodywork is there to combat that frightening number by helping us remember what it means to relax. The physical changes massage brings to your body can have a positive effect in many areas of your life. Besides increasing relaxation and decreasing anxiety, massage lowers blood pressure, increases circulation, improves injury recovery, encourages deep sleep, and increases concentration. It reduces fatigue and gives you more energy to handle stressful situations.

Massage is a perfect elixir for good health, but it can also provide an integration of body and mind. By producing a meditative state or heightened awareness of the present moment, massage can provide emotional and spiritual balance, bringing with it true relaxation and peace.

The incredible benefits of massage are doubly powerful if taken in regular "doses." Researchers from the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami, found that recipients of massage can benefit even in small doses (15 minutes of chair massage or a half-hour table session). They also note that receiving bodywork two to three times a week is even more beneficial. While this may not be feasible, it's nice to know that this "medicine" only gets better with frequency.

## What It Does

In an age of technical and, at times, impersonal medicine, massage offers a drug-free, non-invasive, and humanistic approach based on the body's natural ability to heal itself. Following is a brief list of the many known, research-based benefits of massage and bodywork:

- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs;
- Stimulates the flow of lymph, the body's natural defense system, against toxic invaders. For example, in breast cancer patients, massage has been shown to increase the cells that fight cancer.

Furthermore, increased circulation of blood and lymph systems improves the condition of the body's largest organ -- the skin;

- Relaxes and softens injured and overused muscles;
- Reduces spasms and cramping;
- Increases joint flexibility;
- Reduces recovery time and helps prepare the body for strenuous workouts, reducing subsequent muscle pain of athletes at any level;
- Releases endorphins -- the body's natural painkiller -- and is proving very beneficial in patients with chronic illness, injury, and post-op pain;
- Reduces post-surgery adhesions and edema and can be used to reduce and

realign scar tissue after healing has occurred;

- Improves range-of-motion and decreases discomfort for patients with low back pain;
- Relieves pain for migraine sufferers and decreases the need for medication;
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles and reduces shortening of the muscles for those with restricted range of motion;
- Assists with shorter labor for expectant mothers, as well as reduces the need for medication, eases postpartum depression and anxiety, and contributes to a shorter hospital stay.

The benefits of massage are diverse. No matter how great it feels, massage isn't just a luxury; it's a health necessity.



To get the full benefits of massage, take it easy after your session and let it soak in.

# On the Rocks

## Stone Massage Provides Tension Relief and Grounding

It's a practice as old as time, but one that has been recently rediscovered. LaStone Massage Therapy, generically known as hot stone massage, is the updated version of a technique employed by Native Americans, using gently warmed rocks to massage the body. The technique provides a deeply relaxing, healing, detoxifying, and, some say, spiritual experience.

Typically, the stones are smooth, black rounds of basalt in varying sizes heated in water to temperatures between 125 and 140 degrees. Warm stones encourage the exchange of blood and lymph and provide soothing heat for deep-tissue work. Cold stones are also used to aide with inflammation, moving blood out of the area, and balancing male/female energies. The alternating heat and cold of thermotherapy brings the entire body into the healing process, with a rapid exchange of blood and oxygen and alternating rise and fall of respiration rate as the body seeks homeostasis.

During treatment hot stones are placed on energy pathways. Some are covered with a towel and positioned to apply steady warmth and pressure along the spine and neck. Others are placed between fingers and toes and on the stomach and forehead -- key spots where energy flow can get blocked. Still others are used almost as an extension of the practitioner's hands to help go deeper into resistant muscle tissue. This requires less effort from the practitioner's own body and delivers healing warmth to the hands, benefitting the therapist, as well as the client.

In addition to the physical effects, hot stone massage is also considered a kind of energy work, calming and energizing the body but with an extra element thrown into the mix to make it more than just a sensory delight. The theory is that incorporating something from nature -- the stones -- adds a symbolic dimension to this therapy, creating a primal connection to the elements for a grounding experience.



**Stone massage is both calming and energizing.**

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# 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.

*Not a shred of  
evidence exists in  
favor of the idea  
that life is  
serious.*

-Brendan Gill

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Consider having the professional staff from Massage & Wellness come to your next function and offer relaxing chair massages to your members! \$45 per hour. Relieve for your staff the stresses of the day-to-day grind. Make them more productive... Show your appreciation for them with this special gift...

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- 60min. Massage w/ Aromatherapy And Paraffin Hand Treatment: \$62.50 (Call for Student Rate)
- Hot Stone Massage + Paraffin Hand Treatment: \$97.50 (Call for Student Rate)
- Serenity Package: (4) 60-minute massages: \$175 (Call for Student Rate)
- Couples Massage: 60 minutes / \$120 (\$100 students)

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