

Stress relief and arthritis

Pain and physical limitations can add greatly to the stress level of anyone suffering from arthritis. Emotional stress can, in turn, increase your sensitivity to pain and drain your energy for dealing with your disease and the demands of a normal life.

Therapeutic massage elicits the body's "relaxation response" resulting in a deep sense of calm. This can leave you feeling rested and optimistic, with more energy to face your daily life. The quality of restful sleep usually improves in the days following a massage, giving your body a chance to further repair and restore your energy levels.

Massage for simple stress relief can play an especially positive role in managing rheumatoid arthritis. Research shows both that emotional stress can impair the body's immune response and that regular massage therapy can improve immune system function. Since rheumatoid arthritis is an immune system disorder, regular massage therapy between flare-ups can make one less susceptible to acute episodes.

Meeting your individual needs

Your massage therapist may use a variety of techniques based on his or her evaluation of your condition on a given day. Some techniques might include cool or hot packs, trigger point therapy, neuromuscular therapy, Swedish massage and gentle stretching. Your therapist will be delighted to explain his or her approach, as well as any specialized experience or training in working with arthritis.

Your comprehensive treatment plan

Your family doctor or rheumatologist can work with your massage therapist to help decide the best comprehensive program for you in managing your arthritis. Approaches that provide relief to many arthritis sufferers are appropriate exercise, good nutrition, heat and cold therapy, anti-inflammatory drugs, physical therapy, frequent short rest periods and stress management. Therapeutic massage can be an important addition to your plan by reducing pain, helping maintain joint mobility and relieving stress which, in turn, can renew the mental and physical resources you need for enjoying a full life.

Gentle massage often helps arthritis, especially when it's delivered in a caring, compassionate manner. — Dr. Christine Northrup, Health Wisdom for Women



Body N Soul Massage Deborah Simmers- Shahadey

634 E. Davis Ave
Terre Haute, IN
(3 blocks East of Honey
Creek Mall beside
HealthQuest Nutrition
Center & Ermisch Cleaners— across from
T.H. South High School)

(812) 230-0697

www.bodydayspa.net

Arthritis and Therapeutic Massage



*Easing the challenges
and discomforts
as part of
your complete
arthritis program*

If you suffer from the pain, swelling, or stiffness of arthritis, you are not alone. Millions suffer from this disease which means literally “joint inflammation” and is a general term for over 100 conditions. Arthritis can strike at any age, and affects more women than men. The overwhelming majority of cases take one of two forms: osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis.

Even though there is no known cure for arthritis, certain measures can slow down the process and help you live more comfortably. Therapeutic massage is one of these measures.

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is degeneration of the cartilage that cushions and forms a slick surface for movement in affected joints. It is often the result of years of normal wear. In its advanced stages it can leave bone grinding against bone. The major symptoms of osteoarthritis are pain, stiffness in the joints, and inflammation and swelling following overuse.

Rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an immune disorder which causes inflammation in the joint’s lining. Over time, it can damage cartilage, bone and other structures around the joints, and may even cause deformity. Rheumatoid arthritis usually affects the same joint on both sides of the body (I.e. both knees). In worst cases, inflammation can spread to membranes around internal organs. Symptoms include pain, swelling and stiffness of the joints. During flare-ups you may experience flu-like symptoms, such as fever, sweats or fatigue. Symptoms can vary from day to day, with periods of intense flare-ups alternating with days of minimal discomfort.

Why Therapeutic Massage?

Therapeutic massage can be a powerful ally in any program for managing your arthritis and maintaining as normal a life as possible. Massage is especially effective in addressing the most common side effects caused by painful and stiff joints: muscle tension and pain, poor circulation, and limitations on normal movement and exercise.

Pain relief. Massage can reduce the devastating grip of arthritic pain by helping you refocus attention on the pleasant sensation of nurturing touch. In addition, current research indicates that massage stimulates the release of endorphins, your body’s natural pain killers, which can give you a welcome “pain break.”

Reduced muscle tension: Muscles automatically tighten protectively around any painful area such as an arthritic joint. The resulting muscle tension limits your range of motion and can be a source of pain itself. Therapeutic massage works directly with muscles to release tension and serves to calm the nervous system, allowing your muscles to relax further. As a result, you may experience less pain and better joint mobility.

Increased circulation: Massage has been shown to increase circulation, cleansing tissues of irritating and painful by-products of arthritic inflammation and improving nutrition to both muscles and joints. Swelling often lessens with massage as excess fluid is pushed into the circulatory system where it can be eliminated. You can enjoy increased joint mobility, reduced pain in the affected muscles and joint and, with regular massage, an improvement in your body’s natural joint lubrication.

Support for exercise: Research indicates that maintaining mobility and exercising appropriately can slow the degenerative process of arthritis, both in the joints themselves and in muscles that can atrophy with disease. Because massage can reduce discomfort in muscles around your joints and improve joint mobility, you may find it easier and less painful to stretch and exercise appropriately.

Some precautions to take

As long as it feels comfortable, therapeutic massage is almost always helpful with a few precautions. Massage therapy should never cause you pain or discomfort and should stay within your tolerance level at all times. Extra caution is needed if you are on medication to suppress your symptoms, since this can interfere with your giving accurate feedback to your massage therapist on pressure or tenderness. If you find you are fatigued or sore after a massage, shorter sessions may be more appropriate and useful for you.

Extreme care should be taken during flare-ups of rheumatoid arthritis, with no massage at all directly on your affected joints. Many therapists prefer not to massage during this time. Others will work very gently in non-affected areas to relieve tension and improve your overall comfort.

Care should also be taken with certain conditions unrelated to arthritis. Your massage therapist will review your medical history to determine what other precautions should be taken.

To make sure you are receiving the most comfortable and effective treatment, keep your massage therapist informed at every session about your symptoms, medications and any changes in your health. It is also important to let your primary health care practitioner know you are receiving massage.