

## **Stress: Its Cumulative Effect**

Stress not only interferes with your ability to enjoy life, but can also threaten your good health. Research indicates that unrelieved stress can impair the body's immune system and aggravate many chronic ailments. Some common conditions such as insomnia, high blood pressure or breathing difficulties can be a direct result of excess stress. Because its effects are cumulative, managing stress becomes increasingly important with age.

## **Massage and stress**

Therapeutic massage can result in a deep sense of relaxation, which for many people is reason enough to have one. Massage elicits the body's "relaxation response," a natural function of the nervous system that reverses the effects of unwanted stress on the body. Muscles that have been tensed for action relax, breathing slows and deepens, a racing heart and high blood pressure return toward normal.

With regular massage therapy you can even improve your ability to relax on your own. This happens as the feeling of relaxation becomes familiar, helping you to recognize tension as it occurs and take measures to release it before it becomes a problem.

As massage decreases your general level of tension, you may find yourself feeling pleasantly relaxed and rejuvenated. This can translate into increased energy for daily activities, more patience with life's minor irritations, and a renewed enthusiasm for daily living.

## **When to get a massage**

Massage is almost always useful for stress relief or any of the specific conditions mentioned in this brochure. However, for some health conditions massage should be avoided, or at least cautiously done. Examples of conditions requiring different degrees of caution are severe osteoporosis, arthritis in the inflamed stage, and thrombophlebitis.

Always inform your massage therapist about changes in your health, even minor ones. Your massage therapist may ask permission to contact your physician for more information.

In the end, the question of when to get a massage is best answered by experiencing it. For people of all ages, massage can provide significant benefits of improved health, relaxation and vitality.

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# Therapeutic Massage For Your Senior Years



*Promoting Lifelong  
Health,  
Relaxation  
and Vitality*

Your body repairs itself throughout your lifetime, but with each year the process becomes a little less efficient. The body gradually loses some of its ability to spring back from the wear and tear of daily living. Even healthy individuals who remain vigorous into their nineties may accumulate an assortment of annoying problems.

Though aging is unavoidable, you can take steps to maintain or improve your strength, flexibility, coordination and energy no matter how old you are. Exercise and good nutrition can also improve physical and mental well-being throughout your lifetime.

## Massage: an honored tradition

Ancient Chinese, Egyptian, Japanese and Arab medical literatures frequently refer to massage as a health treatment. Hippocrates prescribed massage for patients and athletes. Today, therapeutic massage is routinely prescribed for relaxation and health in Europe, Asia, Canada, and increasingly in the United States.

## Your Massage Therapist

Massage therapists have extensive training that includes massage technique, anatomy and physiology, and knowledge of when and when not to massage. In addition, most massage therapists have advanced training in one or more specialized types of massage. Your massage therapist will be happy to answer any question about his or her education, experience, certification or licensing, and areas of specialization.

## Help for specific problems

Research shows that massage loosens muscle tension, increases circulation, and calms the nervous system. These simple effects can help with many conditions. Specifically, therapeutic massage can:

- **Relieve pain from tight muscles.** Muscles are gently kneaded and stretched, relieving spasm and allowing circulation to increase.
- **Improve health and mobility of joints.** Massage relieves muscle tension that restricts movement, and improves natural joint lubrication as circulation increases.
- **Improve posture and coordination.** Relief of chronic muscle tension allows greater ease of movement.
- **Relieve itchy, dry skin.** Massage increases circulation to the skin, improving both the tone and elasticity and moisturizing naturally.
- **Enhance restful sleep.** Reduced muscle tension increases comfort and deepens sleep.
- **Reduce swelling from excess water retention.** Massage gently moves fluid into the circulation system where it can be eliminated.
- **Speed healing from injuries or surgery.** Increased circulation improves the flow of oxygen and nutrients to cells and removes waste products.
- **Ease breathing.** As massage calms the nervous system, breathing slows and deepens. Relief of tension in the shoulder, neck and chest muscles also allows for fuller chest expansion.
- **Increase vitality, energy, and mental alertness.** Increased circulation brings nutrition to your cells and oxygen to your brain. This can boost your energy and temporarily improve mental clarity. This may make it easier to be more mentally and physically active which can further increase your energy.

## Practical Considerations

- **Communicating your needs.** Tell your massage therapist why you are getting a massage. For example, you may want relief for sore feet or tight shoulders, or you may just want to relax.
- **Dress.** Your massage therapist will leave the room while you undress. You will be covered warmly at all times except for the area being massaged.
- **Getting on the table.** If you wish, your massage therapist will help you. Pillows or cushions will be used to give support.
- **Special concerns.** Always tell your massage therapist if the pressure being used is comfortable. Tell your therapist if you are hard of hearing. If you are too cold or hot, the heat or covers can be adjusted.
- **After the massage.** Before getting up from the table, give yourself a few minutes to reorient from a state of deep relaxation. If you wish, your massage therapist can stay and help you get up.
- **How much is right?** The length of your sessions will depend on your general health and your reason for getting massage. For your first appointment, a half-hour may be enough. Scheduling regular sessions is usually more important than their length for changes that will last between appointments. With experience, you and your massage therapist can set a schedule that is best for you.