

A SHOW OF HANDS

Summer 2009

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Massage as the Body's Workout

Can Bodywork Sometimes Make You Sore?

Shirley Vanderbilt

You've just had a wonderful massage, and you go home feeling both relaxed and rejuvenated. But later that night you feel like you're coming down with something. Or perhaps the next morning, you wake up with twinges of muscle soreness, maybe some fatigue, and you just don't feel yourself. What happened? Chances are it's the massage, and it's perfectly OK.

Keith Grant, head of the Sports and Deep Tissue Massage Department at McKinnon Institute in Oakland, Calif., says, "It's very much like doing a workout. If the muscles aren't used to it, they often respond with some soreness." Grant notes this should last for no more than a day or two. If it lasts longer, the

therapist can find all the kinks that have built up from daily stress and too little or too much exercise. The whole point of a therapeutic massage is to release that tension, work out the kinks, and help your body relax so it can function at an optimal level. All of this work stretches muscles, pushes blood into them, and gets things working again.

A Closer Look

There are several theories, in addition to muscle function, as to why people sometimes experience after-effects from massage.

Massage can stimulate the lymph system, which is comprised of several organs

*It is not
necessary to
understand
music; it is only
necessary that
one enjoy it.*

-Leopold Stokowski



A good massage can sometimes leave you feeling like you had a good workout.

massage may have been too intense, and the therapist should adjust for this in the next session. However, just as with exercise, when your body adjusts to having this type of workout, your physical response will also be less intense.

A professional massage is more than an ordinary backrub. Your massage

(thymus, tonsils, spleen, adenoids), hundreds of lymph nodes, and a multitude of vessels that run throughout the body. These lymphatic vessels carry a clear fluid, known as lymph, that circulates around the body's tissues, absorbing fluid, waste products, dead cells, bacteria, viruses, fats, and proteins

Continued on page 2

Office Hours and Contact

HAND & HAND Total. Body. Wellness.
Tom Saulnier - CMT, ZBT
805-501-2011
handnhand5@yahoo.com
www.mobilehands.biz
Mon. - Sat., By Appointment

In this Issue

Massage as the Body's Workout
Massage for Your Teenager?
Here Comes the Sun

Continued from page 1

from the tissue as it goes, while also giving passage to immune cells as they're needed. Massage can sometimes stimulate the lymph system, helping to eliminate toxins from the body. And if the body contains a high level of environmental or dietary toxins, you could feel some mild, flu-like symptoms. While most people come out of a typical massage feeling nothing but relaxed, some people do report feeling a bit nauseous. If this is the case, make sure to drink plenty of water and perhaps take a slow walk. Movement creates a greater lymphatic response and will hurry the process along.

Grant points to another theory being closely examined by experts. Neurological sensitivity, or "sensitization," looks at the "whole response of what's going on in a person." As Grant explains, massage provides a significant amount of input to the central nervous system and the body responds to that increased information. Pain and other occasional after-effects may be the result of a system that has received more information than it can handle at that particular time. And because the amount of sensory input we receive during any day or week is always fluctuating, sometimes we may be overloaded and other times not. It depends on the total stress (emotional, spiritual and physical) being experienced by the body at that moment.

Minimizing Overload

So what can you do to minimize the sometimes uncomfortable side effects? It's important to communicate with your massage therapist regarding your expectations, as well as your current state of health. Your therapist can then tailor the massage to your personal needs and desires, and make adjustments in intensity or technique as the session proceeds. "I'd look at what's being done," says Grant. In some cases, a shorter or more soothing session may be more appropriate. In others, the therapist may need to change the kind of technique used. Much of this can be judged by how the person is feeling and responding during the massage.

In addition to communicating clearly with your practitioner throughout the session, following a few simple steps will help ease tenderness and maximize

benefits:

- UNDERSTAND THAT EVERY BODY REACTS DIFFERENTLY.

Your body is an organism made up of complex systems that react to a constantly changing influx of external factors.

- MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH PRACTICES.

This means keeping your mind free of negative clutter.

- DRINK PLENTY OF WATER IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING YOUR TREATMENT.

Continue to do so for the next day or two. This will rehydrate your tissues and ease the effects.

- TAKE IT EASY AFTER YOUR MASSAGE.

Go home, relax and just allow your body to find its balance naturally.

Getting a massage can do you a world of good. And getting massage frequently can do even more. This is the beauty of bodywork. Taking part in this form of regularly scheduled self-care can play a

huge part in how healthy you'll be and how youthful you'll remain. Budgeting time and money for bodywork at consistent intervals is an investment in your health. And remember: just because massage feels like a pampering treat doesn't mean it is any less therapeutic. Consider massage appointments a necessary piece of your health plan, and work with your practitioner to establish a treatment schedule that best meets your needs.

Like exercise, making bodywork a habitual practice is good for your health. And if you wake up the next morning a little sore, it's probably because you had a really good massage.



Bodywork can stimulate the lymph system, which can help detox the body.

Massage for Your Teenager?

Bodywork Can Ease Adolescent Angst

While teens may be less likely than their parents to go to a massage therapist, there are plenty of reasons why this age group should be encouraged to give it a try. The benefits of massage are well documented, among them relief of muscle tension, lowered stress hormones, increased sense of relaxation, improved immune function, and even a heightened ability to concentrate, according to studies conducted by the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine. But for teenagers, there's an additional payback.

The teenage body is in the midst of transformation -- exponential growth and development in a rapid period of time. On the physical side, teens may be at increased risk for aches, pains, and injury. Many teens strain their bodies with competitive sports, get erratic sleep, and consume a less-than-optimal diet. Massage can help muscles recover from overuse, and help balance the body and maintain that stability.

Perhaps even more crucial, teen massage can help improve body image and sleep patterns, and contribute to decreased depression, anxiety, and stress. This keeps a teen connected to her body, even as it morphs in confounding ways. "Many teens are self-conscious, and not happy with their bodies," says Eeris Kallil, massage therapist and shiatsu instructor at the Boulder College of Massage Therapy, in Colorado. "Massage can help teens stay grounded." Bodywork has also been reported to help mediate eating disorders, a growing concern among teens.

Another potential plus: A beneficial, therapeutic relationship can develop between bodyworkers and teenagers during the years when adolescents need adult confidantes, but keep parents at a distance. The practitioner can become a supportive, trusted adult in a teen's life. And the session itself, according to Kallil, can be a way to deal with all the physical and emotional turmoil of this tender age.



Massage eases teen depression and anxiety.

Here Comes the Sun

Updated UV Index Shines Light on Rays

A crucial warning system has been recently updated for your skin's protection. In compliance with the World Health Organization, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Weather Service revamped the UV Index, a system created to alert people about the level of harmful ultraviolet (UV) light rays from the sun. Overexposure to UV rays can cause wrinkles and premature aging, skin cancer, cataracts, and immune system suppression.

Many factors influence the strength of UV rays: UV light is stronger in the summer, at higher altitudes, and in areas closer to the equator. It's also stronger at midday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the sun is directly overhead.

The new UV index ranges from 0-11 with guidelines as follows:

0-2: **LOW.**

Minimal exposure for the average person, but watch for reflected UV from snow and water.

3-5: **MODERATE.**

Stay in the shade during midday.

Cover-up outside.

6-7: **HIGH.**

Wear a hat, sunglasses, and a sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15. Avoid midday sun.

8-10: **VERY HIGH.**

Take extra precautions, and avoid midday sun. Wear protective clothing.

11: **EXTREME.**

Take all precautions, seek shade, and avoid midday sun. If possible, stay indoors.

As part of its daily forecast, the National Weather Service publishes the UV index for each area of the country. Go to www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html and enter your zip code to find your UV index for the day. The Weather Channel, as well as most local TV stations, include the UV index in their weather forecast. It can also be found at www.weather.com.

For a detailed description of the UV index, or for more information on sun protection, visit www.epa.gov/sunwise.

*I was really too
honest a man to
be a politician
and live.*

-Socrates

FLEXIBLE \$PENDING ACCOUNT

Did you know...

Your MASSAGE may be TAX DEDUCTIBLE?

A Flexible Spending Account or Cafeteria Plan gives employees an option for tax-free salary reductions to pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses (not covered by insurance) throughout the year.

Many insurance companies** recognize Massage Therapy as a "Deductible Expense".

* Deductible medical expenses are subject to change based on updates to IRS rules and regulations. ** Insurance regulations may prohibit the reimbursement of health insurance premiums in your state. For additional information, please contact your insurance provider and/or tax professional.

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1230-5 Madera Road #178
Simi Valley, CA 93065



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