

# Body Sense

A public education magazine brought to you by ABMP

autumn 2018

## Sports Massage

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*The Accumulation  
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*Recharge the Old-Fashioned Way*

Tai Chi  
*Eases Fibromyalgia Pain*







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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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## HAPPY FALL

For the sports fans out there, I'm sure you agree that this time of year is the sweet spot—when a convergence of the “big four” send us into a fandom frenzy. Football, hockey, and basketball seasons begin, while the boys of summer start finishing their race for the pennant.

Sports fan or not, everyone can appreciate the level of dedication these athletes bring to their game and the impact it has on their bodies. That's why these athletes, and their Olympic and collegiate counterparts, have access to the most advanced care, typically including on-staff massage therapists.

But, as you'll read in this issue of *Body Sense*, sports massage is not just for the elite athlete. From the weekend warrior to the twice-weekly gym-goer, the athlete in all of us can benefit from sports massage.

I like to share the story of my daughter, a club-level gymnast since she was 8, who suffered with back pain as her skills increased in intensity a few years back. From pediatrician to orthopedist to physical therapist, we followed the path to find her the pain relief she needed to be able to continue



Body Sense Editor Karrie Osborn

to compete. We added cupping work (think Michael Phelps Rio Olympics 2016), chiropractic, acupuncture, and, of course, employed a crew of massage therapists who each brought their own unique assessment skills to the team, all helping my daughter to continue in the sport she loves. I'm amazed every day at what she can make her body do, and I'm equally grateful for the health-care team that helps her body continue to do it.

Sports massage not only relieves pain; it also improves performance and helps in postevent recovery time. Running a 5K charity race this fall? Then, book your appointments with your therapist now to put a plan together for your training and recovery.

While it's the best time to be a sports fan, I hope you have a chance to get out there yourselves and enjoy the crisp days of autumn. It's the perfect time of year to get your self-care mojo!



## ZERO

The amount of stress you'll have this upcoming holiday season when you get your gift list tackled early. How? Share the gift of massage!

Gift certificates for therapeutic massage and bodywork are simple, thoughtful, and heartfelt.

## Body Sense

massage, bodywork & healthy living

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## Tai Chi Eases Fibromyalgia Symptoms

New research shows that the ancient, slow-moving Chinese exercise known as tai chi is better than aerobic exercise for managing the debilitating effects of fibromyalgia and improving the severity of its symptoms.

The results of a 52-week single-blind trial suggest that tai chi not only eases symptoms of fibromyalgia, but is also associated with improvements in depression, anxiety, self-efficacy, and quality of life.

“Compared with aerobic exercise, the most commonly prescribed non-drug treatment, tai chi appears as effective as, or better for, managing fibromyalgia,” the investigators, led by Chenchen Wang, MD, Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts, write. “This mind-body approach may be considered a therapeutic option in the multidisciplinary management of fibromyalgia.”

Read the full study in the *BMJ* at [www.bmj.com/content/360/bmj.k851](http://www.bmj.com/content/360/bmj.k851). For more information about tai chi, go to [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/tai-chi/art-20045184](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/tai-chi/art-20045184).





## RECYCLED YOGA MATS BY DESIGN LAB

This collection of bold and colorful luxury yoga mats is made from natural tree rubber and recycled plastic bottle microfibers. “The goal was to create a beautiful, highly functional product with the smallest eco footprint possible,” says founder and designer Chad Turner. “While our overall goal is to limit plastics usage, at least we can start repurposing what’s already out there and keep it from our oceans.” Available for \$54–\$68 each at [www.yogadesignlab.com](http://www.yogadesignlab.com).



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# Is Sports Massage Right for You?

By Eric Stephenson, LMT



**Are you a weekend warrior, self-proclaimed athlete, or someone who just generally likes to push themselves a little too hard at the gym?**

If that's the case, then sports massage might be just what the body ordered.

We all know physical activity generates positive health benefits for your body, but it can also create negative effects that arise when you push past your physical limit. That's when you show up on our massage tables with injuries related to this overexertion.

## **THE ATHLETE IN ALL OF US**

Olympic, collegiate, and professional athletes utilize massage therapy to mitigate and recover from sports injuries. Oftentimes, teams employ and even travel with a massage therapist. And research continues to show what athletes already know—massage has a positive effect on athletes and their performance.<sup>1</sup>

The benefits of sports massage extend beyond professional athletes to anyone who participates in regular exercise. Whether it be golf, tennis, or ballroom dancing, if you engage in physical exercise, sports massage is a good option for you. And, if you suffer from a nagging injury or orthopedic condition that keeps you from performing at your best, sports massage is especially helpful.

## **KINDS OF SPORTS MASSAGE**

Did you know that about 65 percent of injuries—both athletic and lifestyle-related—come from overuse of the muscles? The other 35 percent are caused by true trauma.<sup>2</sup> Sports massage



# Whether it be golf, tennis, or ballroom dancing, if you engage in physical exercise, sports massage is a good option for you.

is a customized, targeted approach to improving performance while decreasing pain and various forms of limitation in the body. While sports massage is meant to be customized for every client and every sport, there is a general approach that can be implemented for those who fall into any of the following three possible categories.

## General Sports Massage

Typically, this is a full-body massage approach customized for clients involved in sports like football, tennis, and golf, as well as for clients who are looking to increase the ease, quality, and range of motion of their body movements. This type of sports massage may also be used to prepare the body for physical activity. During this massage, specific attention is often targeted to areas requested by the client.

## Injury-Focused Sports Massage

This approach generally falls outside a full-body approach to target specific movement conditions that include plantar fasciitis, low-back pain, tennis elbow, golfer's elbow, and other common sports injuries. This approach could include active engagement from the client or passive movement techniques. Falling outside a full-body approach allows the client and massage therapist time to focus on two or three areas of the body with specific, desired therapeutic outcomes.

## Pre- and Postevent Sports Massage

This approach is customized to either prepare the athlete for immediate, high-intensity activity, or to help them recover. There are two basic subsets of this kind of massage:

- Pre-event: This approach finds the massage therapist avoiding deep pressure on the athlete and instead employing lighter, faster movements to energize the nervous system rather

than relax it. This would typically fall into a full-body approach with gentle joint movements and stretching.

- Postevent: This session is intended to help calm the nervous system, reduce pain, and help restore muscles to their normal resting length. This would typically fall into a full-body approach with gentle movements and light stretching.

## WHO SHOULD GET A SPORTS MASSAGE?


Anyone who is actively involved in a movement-oriented sport could see great benefits from regular massages, and sports massage specifically. In addition, if you suffer from any of the following ailments, you should ask your massage therapist about injury-focused sports massage:

- Golf elbow
- Frozen shoulder
- Low-back pain
- Pain while running
- Plantar fasciitis
- Shin splints
- Tennis elbow

## BUT IS IT FOR ME?

I once had a client who complained about pain from playing nine rounds of golf. I began to inquire about his warm-up routine and found he was contracting the muscles of his shoulder, when what they really needed was to be lengthened and stretched. We looked at a series of his movements to help identify pain points and improve his execution of those movements. This consultation resulted

in him shifting to the correct body movements and, in turn, eliminated his ongoing chronic pain. He was ecstatic that this simple change of pattern, along with regular sports massage, got him back to the game he loved ... pain-free!

There are many benefits to regular sports massage. Pain relief, injury recovery, and increased somatic awareness are a few of the most important. Your massage therapist is here to help you determine optimal movements for your sport of choice so you can avoid future injury, get past acute, sub-acute, or chronic injuries, and improve the body's range, quality, and ease of motion. 

## Notes

1. Science Daily, "Massage Reduces Inflammation and Promotes Growth of New Mitochondria Following Strenuous Exercise, Study Finds," February 1, 2012, accessed September 2018, [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/02/120201141710.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/02/120201141710.htm).

2. Mark Verstegen, *Core Performance: The Revolutionary Workout Program to Transform Your Body and Your Life* (Rodale, 2005): 56.

*Eric Stephenson is chief wellness officer for Elements Massage, one of the fastest-growing therapeutic massage franchises in the nation, which offers Himalayan Salt Stone Massages and recently launched AromaRitual, the brand's newest line of exclusive aromatherapy treatments. Elements Massage was recognized as part of Entrepreneur's 2018 Franchise 500 Ranking. In addition, Stephenson is cofounder of imassage, Inc. and a board member of the International Spa Association (ISPA).*



# Back Care

Stretch the Pain Away



**Back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and it will affect as much as 80 percent of the population at some point in their lifetimes.** While research continues to show that massage is of great benefit to the back-pain sufferer, there are other things you can do to ward off the pain, including stretching. Here are some simple active isolated stretches (an approach developed by Aaron Mattes) to keep your back healthy between massage appointments.

## PSOAS STRETCH

In this active isolated stretch, begin in a lunge with your hip stacked over your knee. With your core engaged and your posture erect, begin to lunge forward. When you reach the end point of this stretch, hold for 2 seconds. Release. Repeat.





## SPINAL FLEXION

Begin by sitting on the floor with your knees bent and feet apart. Bring your chin to your chest and round the upper back as you move downward into the stretch. Think about trying to touch your nose to your belly button. You can assist this stretch by gently grasping the lower legs and pulling yourself farther. Hold for 2 seconds, release, and repeat.



## SPINAL EXTENSION

Lie facedown on the floor. Place your forehead on your crisscrossed arms. Lift your chest away from the mat. Hold for 2 seconds, release, then repeat.



## SPINAL EXTENSION PART DEUX

Lie facedown on the floor. With your hands placed palm-down under the shoulders, use your back muscles to move into what looks like a cobra pose in yoga. At the end range of the stretch, use your arms to push a little farther and hold for 2 seconds. Release. Repeat.



## Your 32-Pound Head

Looking for the causes of your back pain? Maybe it's your forward-head posture. For every inch of forward-head posture, the weight of the head on the spine increases by 10 pounds. A normal 12-pound head gains 20 pounds when it sits forward on the spine 2 inches. Be body aware, pull your head back over your spine, and focus on alignment.



# The Snowflake Effect

The Accumulation of Stress on the Body

By Nikki Campanale

**There's a fable about a little bird and a mouse discussing the weight of a snowflake.** It was the dead of winter and all the other woodland animals were hibernating. The bird and the mouse made their home in the same tree, so when the mouse woke up and saw the bird sitting on a branch he decided to make his way over for a chat. During the conversation, the mouse asked the bird if he knew how much a snowflake weighed. The bird answered, "One little snowflake? Well, it weighs nothing at all. A snowflake weighs so little that it is almost insignificant."



“Not true,” said the mouse. “The other day I decided to count the snowflakes that landed on one of the tree’s branches. I counted each snowflake as it landed, watching them pile up on the branch and its pine needles. I got to one million. Then number one million and one floated down from the sky and landed on the branch. When it did, the branch broke and fell to the ground. Therefore, that last snowflake must have weighed a lot! Otherwise the branch never would have broken.”

As a massage therapist, I see the tree branch as the human body—strong, sturdy, beautiful, forgiving. I see each snowflake as a stressor. Not as an overt, traumatizing stressor, but a subtle stressor like an argument with a friend, traffic, or being overwhelmed at work. Subtle stress is the snowflake that gracefully falls on the branch of a tree until it builds up so high that the branch breaks.

Years ago, I had a client with a headache that wouldn’t go away for over two months. It started in the morning, then it would come back after lunch. Before he knew it, he had it all day. Medication didn’t help. He looked for answers online and in books. Hormones, allergies, stress—the possibilities were endless. He came to me saying his wife thought it was a stress headache, but he didn’t think he was stressed. I asked him to describe what a stressed person looks like to

him. He said pale, dark circles under the eyes, no appetite, can’t sleep, etc.

Although these are well-known signs of stress, they don’t manifest that way unless we’ve ignored all other signs and symptoms the body is presenting. In other words, dark circles and loss of sleep and appetite is the branch breaking. The headache is a part of the snow pile.

I told him that although he may not feel stressed, we compartmentalize our stress to make it easier to function throughout our daily activities. He may be able to make it through the day now but, if not addressed, it will get worse and lead to more debilitating symptoms. I had a feeling he knew he was on that line. For many of my clients, massage is their last resort. He had that “I’m desperate and will try anything, even massage” look.


I began my massage. Aside from general tension, his muscles felt pretty good. However, when I got to his face, I felt a lot of tension. The temples and eye orbits were not supple at all. I thought, “No wonder he has a headache. His head is in a vice!”

I gave him homework—ice, stretches, tons of water. He did his homework, was diligent about making it to his appointments, and was engaged when we talked about muscle health. I told him he had been cultivating his headache for months and to anticipate months before the headache was gone. “One day, you’re going to wake up,” I said, “get your

coffee, and head to work. Then, part way through your morning, you’ll realize your headache is gone.” He had a look of relief on his face, much different than the look he had when he first came in.

I’m happy to say we did it! His headache was gone after 10 visits. I say “we” because both he and I accomplished a common goal together.

Doctors have patients. They listen, give advice, and prescribe the best course of action that they believe will cure the patient’s ailment. Massage therapists have clients. We work in tandem to find the best course of action to rehabilitate the body. The massage only facilitates the healing process. It’s what the client does at home with self-care that makes the difference.

We don’t “fix” or “cure,” we rehabilitate. Rehabilitation is a journey full of trials and errors, successes and failures. Don’t be discouraged if the process takes some time; it’s part of the rehabilitation journey! Just take a breath and remember, snow doesn’t melt all at once. It disappears bit by bit until a beautiful branch is exposed and ready to bloom. 

*Nikki Campanale is a yoga instructor and massage therapist at Elements Massage in Marlborough, Massachusetts.*



# Unplugged

Recharge the old-fashioned way

by Lynn J. Parentini

**In today's world, most of us find ourselves stuck in one mode: always on.** We're working more hours, sleeping less, and communicating through text, email, and social media on a seemingly nonstop basis. But just like our brains require sleep at night, they also require some downtime during the day. If you were to operate a car, a power tool, or any mechanical device for long periods of time without a break to cool down and perform maintenance, it would shudder to a stop and cease to function. Your brain needs to follow the same maintenance schedule, because the stress caused by sensory overload won't just ruin your day—it can also ruin your health in countless ways.





## Did You Know?

On average, users check their phones 47 times each day and spend a combined total of 4 hours staring at the screen.

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When your phone or tablet is low on power, you immediately reach for the charging cord. But when a human being's batteries are depleted, they should take the opposite route and *unplug* instead. Unplugging means spending a few minutes disconnecting from everything—including your devices, your coworkers, your family, your duties, and your normal routine—in order to destress, decompress, and prepare for the rest of the day's tasks. These compact meditation sessions will help keep you healthy, happy, and alert, and they're easy to achieve if you follow a few simple guidelines.

### CHANGE THE SCENERY

When we take time off from our jobs, we don't go to the office to do our lounging around; we do it on a sundrenched beach, a cruise ship, or some other place that's vastly different from our normal working environment. The same holds true for the mini-vacations your brain needs each day. In other words, if you've been balancing spreadsheets at your desk all morning, a few minutes spent browsing the internet at the same desk chair isn't much of a getaway.

Instead, alter your surroundings completely by visiting a nearby park, strolling beside a river or through a garden, or just setting up a "rehabilitation chair" under a tree. Seek out natural light and fresh air and, if possible, avoid any manmade noises. Babbling brooks and birdsongs are a plus, as

science suggests that nature sounds have a calming, restorative effect on our psyches. And while a brisk jog or a hike through the woods has its benefits, strenuous activities like these aren't the best choices during unplugging because your brain will be hard at work navigating the terrain instead of just kicking back and relaxing like it should.

### TAKE YOURSELF OFF THE GRID

Unplugging is like taking a waking nap, and all the things that bother you when you're trying to sleep will bother you during your unplugging session too. In order to properly recharge, put away your phone and all other devices. Even when you're not talking or texting, simply having a phone nearby can be like standing in a room full of people due to the constant stream of emails, posts, tweets, shares, and likes. And speaking of people, be sure to avoid them during this time; unplugging is a solitary activity, and your brain—specifically your prefrontal cortex—needs a break from both conversation and multitasking to lower your anxiety levels and boost your ability to think clearly, logically, and rationally.

The act of unplugging doesn't need to be complex or extravagant. Depending on your location and the time of day, good choices include doing a few minutes of light stretching; taking a bath or shower in dim lighting or by candlelight; sinking down in your comfiest chair with a cup of herbal tea, a glass of sparkling water or

juice, or another nonstimulating beverage; sprawling beneath a tree and enjoying the show nature puts on; or lighting a scented candle or a stick of incense and lying on a sofa or yoga mat for a few minutes of sweet-smelling stillness.

### DON'T PENCIL IT IN; USE A PERMANENT MARKER

Many of us feel we should only take a break once we've finished our work, treating the downtime like a reward. But then the work takes longer because we're overstressed, leaving us without any time to unplug and refresh. We end up working more hours than usual and need that break more than ever, but don't allow ourselves to take it for fear of falling even further behind.

The truth is, working longer hours doesn't always produce better results. Studies have shown that taking short breaks during the workday not only improves focus and rebuilds energy, but also increases productivity. That means downtime should be a regularly scheduled part of your routine, just like your other important tasks. By adding this crucial element to your daily calendar, you'll be able to face every duty, project, or challenge with a smile and a full battery. 📌

*Lynn J. Parentini is an author, speaker, and creative strategist for the wellness, skin, and spa industry.*

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Kristin Coverly, LMT, is a massage therapist and educator for Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals.

**My niece is 7 months pregnant and is having lots of back pain. Would it be appropriate for me to gift her a massage with a therapist in her area?**

Pregnancy massage can be incredibly beneficial for moms-to-be! This specific massage modality can help reduce general physical discomfort as well as pain in specific areas, including the low back and hips. It also helps decrease anxiety and promote better sleep. When you're choosing a massage therapist to buy the gift certificate from, check their credentials before swiping your credit card. Look for a practitioner with specific training in prenatal massage. Buying a gift certificate from a therapist with this specialized training and experience will help ensure you give your niece the best gift—and most beneficial bodywork—possible!



**“What are these brown spots I’m getting on my hands and chest? My grandmother used to call them liver spots. Should I be worried?”**

This is hyperpigmentation, which, in simplest terms, is the overproduction of melanin. UV rays from sun exposure are the biggest contributor to hyperpigmentation issues. Hormones, inflammation, and skin injuries also can cause it. Hyperpigmentation can present in many ways, including:

- Liver spots, which, named for their color, most often appear on the hands and are caused by cumulative and chronic unprotected sun exposure.
- Melasma, often called a pregnancy mask, is a pattern of splotches that occurs across the face, primarily around the mouth and cheeks. It is caused by hormonal imbalances and often occurs in pregnancy and menopause.
- Mottling is the speckling of darker color that occurs over sun-exposed areas like the face and hands, and is one of the first signs of sun-related premature aging.

Addressing hyperpigmentation starts first and foremost with avoiding sun and heat sources and wearing sunscreen when you are outside. Also, reduce sources of inflammation, including picking pimples and using overly aggressive skin treatments. Use broad-spectrum sunscreen every day, use a daily chemoexfoliant such as alpha hydroxy acids, and use a melanin suppressant at night. Your esthetician can play a pivotal role in helping address your hyperpigmentation concerns.

Mark Lees, PhD, MS, CIDESCO, is a skin care educator, product developer, therapist, and author.



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