

fingertips for the client

BY LAURIE CHANCE SMITH



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MASSAGE: YOUR KEY TO HEALTH



“Massage reminds your body of the pleasure of taking time out.”

Esme Floyd and Paul Wills,
authors of *Body Massage*

The notion of healing has always fascinated humans. And the healing power of touch, for both body and mind, has been recognized for millennia. Ancient Egyptian artwork depicts doctors utilizing a relaxing hand massage, and the Greek healer Hippocrates, often touted as the father of modern medicine, suggested that physicians become adept at “rubbing” their patients to increase health. Among the countless ways to maintain strength and vitality, “massage is the most basic healing tool,” writes Kristine Kaoverii Weber, author of *Healing Self Massage*.

Therapeutic touch is an instinctive and eloquent form of communication that has been molded into a healing art. Larry Costa, author of *Massage: Mind and Body*, writes that massage has many “physical and mental benefits, including ... relieving muscle soreness, increasing flexibility, easing chronic pain, reducing tension headaches, boosting the immune system, promoting restful sleep, and improving concentration.” Massage positively affects the body’s circulatory, nervous, and immune systems. By encouraging blood flow through the veins, massage benefits the entire body. The calming effects of massage on the nervous system often produce a sense of serenity and well-being. Regular massage also stimulates the lymphatic system, which enhances the function of the immune system.

From easing arthritis and asthma to improving digestion, the benefits of massage therapy run the gamut. Massage helps relieve daily stressors and eases recovery from many serious illnesses. In *The Complete Book of Relaxation Techniques*, Jenny Sutcliffe points out that massage can relieve pain by stimulating the production of endorphins—the body’s own painkillers—and, by increasing the sensory input to the brain, thereby blocking out the pain messages.

The positive physiological and psychological effects of massage were demonstrated in a recent study of patients undergoing care for cancer. When given massage, study participants at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston exhibited increased relaxation, better sleep, and improved immune function, along with relief from fatigue, pain, anxiety, and nausea.

In *Ayurvedic Herbal Massage*, author Gita Ramesh says regular massages can “relieve stress and help to promote a long and healthy life.” In the Indian healing system of ayurveda, massage is considered a form of whole body exercise that increases stamina and energy, while simultaneously delivering an inexpressible quality of stillness and joy—a time to be present. Massage realigns the entire body, promotes deeper and more natural breathing patterns, and helps restore individual resources of vital energy. The moments spent in massage are an opportunity to experience oneself as completely accepted.

Regular massage is a gift to yourself. Through the power of structured, healing touch, massage helps the body run smoothly, like keeping a musical instrument in perfect tune. Massage rejuvenates the body from the outside in, with side benefits that include improved complexion, better posture, and a relaxed disposition on life. For additional information about the numerous benefits and types of massage, visit www.massagetherapy.com. **m&b**

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