



# The Benefits of Massage

## Bodywork Goes Beyond Relaxation

As you lie on the table under crisp, fresh sheets, hushed music draws you into the moment. The smell of sage fills the air and you hear the gentle sound of massage oil being warmed in your therapist's hands. Once the session gets underway, the daily stressors and aching muscles fade into an oblivious 60 minutes of relief, and all you can comprehend right now is not wanting it to end.

But what if that hour of massage did more for you than just take the pressures of the day away? What if that gentle, Swedish massage helped you combat cancer? What if bodywork helped you recover from a strained hamstring in half the time? What if your sleep,

cultures. Touching is a natural human reaction to pain and stress, and for conveying compassion and support. When you bump your head or have a sore calf, the natural response is to rub it to feel better. The same was true of our earliest ancestors.

Healers throughout time and throughout the world have instinctually and independently developed a wide range of therapeutic techniques using touch. Many are still in use today, and with good reason. We now have scientific proof of the benefits of massage -- benefits ranging from treating chronic diseases and injuries to alleviating the growing tensions of our modern lifestyles. Having a massage does more



Along with easing stress -- the No. 1 cause of disease -- massage has a long list of benefits.

digestion, and mood all improved with massage and bodywork? What if these weren't just "what if's"?

Evidence is showing that the more massage you can allow yourself, the better you'll feel. Here's why:

Massage as a healing tool has been around for thousands of years in many

than just relax your body and mind -- there are specific physiological and psychological changes that occur, and even more so when massage is utilized as a preventative, frequent therapy and not simply mere luxury. Massage not only feels good, but it can cure what ails you.

Continued on page 2

### Office Hours and Contact

Mix It Up! at Lake Martin

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10am-6pm

### In this Issue

The Benefits of Massage  
Lavender  
Hot or Cold for Injuries?

Continued from page 1

## The Fallout of Stress

Experts estimate that 80 percent to 90 percent of disease is stress-related. Massage and bodywork is there to combat that frightening number by helping us remember what it means to relax. The physical changes massage brings to your body can have a positive effect in many areas of your life. Besides increasing relaxation and decreasing anxiety, massage lowers blood pressure, increases circulation, improves injury recovery, encourages deep sleep, and increases concentration. It reduces fatigue and gives you more energy to handle stressful situations.

Massage is a perfect elixir for good health, but it can also provide an integration of body and mind. By producing a meditative state or heightened awareness of the present moment, massage can provide emotional and spiritual balance, bringing with it true relaxation and peace.

The incredible benefits of massage are doubly powerful if taken in regular "doses." Researchers from the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami, found that recipients of massage can benefit even in small doses (15 minutes of chair massage or a half-hour table session). They also note that receiving bodywork two to three times a week is even more beneficial. While this may not be feasible, it's nice to know that this "medicine" only gets better with frequency.

## What It Does

In an age of technical and, at times, impersonal medicine, massage offers a drug-free, non-invasive, and humanistic approach based on the body's natural ability to heal itself. Following is a brief list of the many known, research-based benefits of massage and bodywork:

- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs;
- Stimulates the flow of lymph, the body's natural defense system, against toxic invaders. For example, in breast cancer patients, massage has been shown to increase the cells that fight cancer.

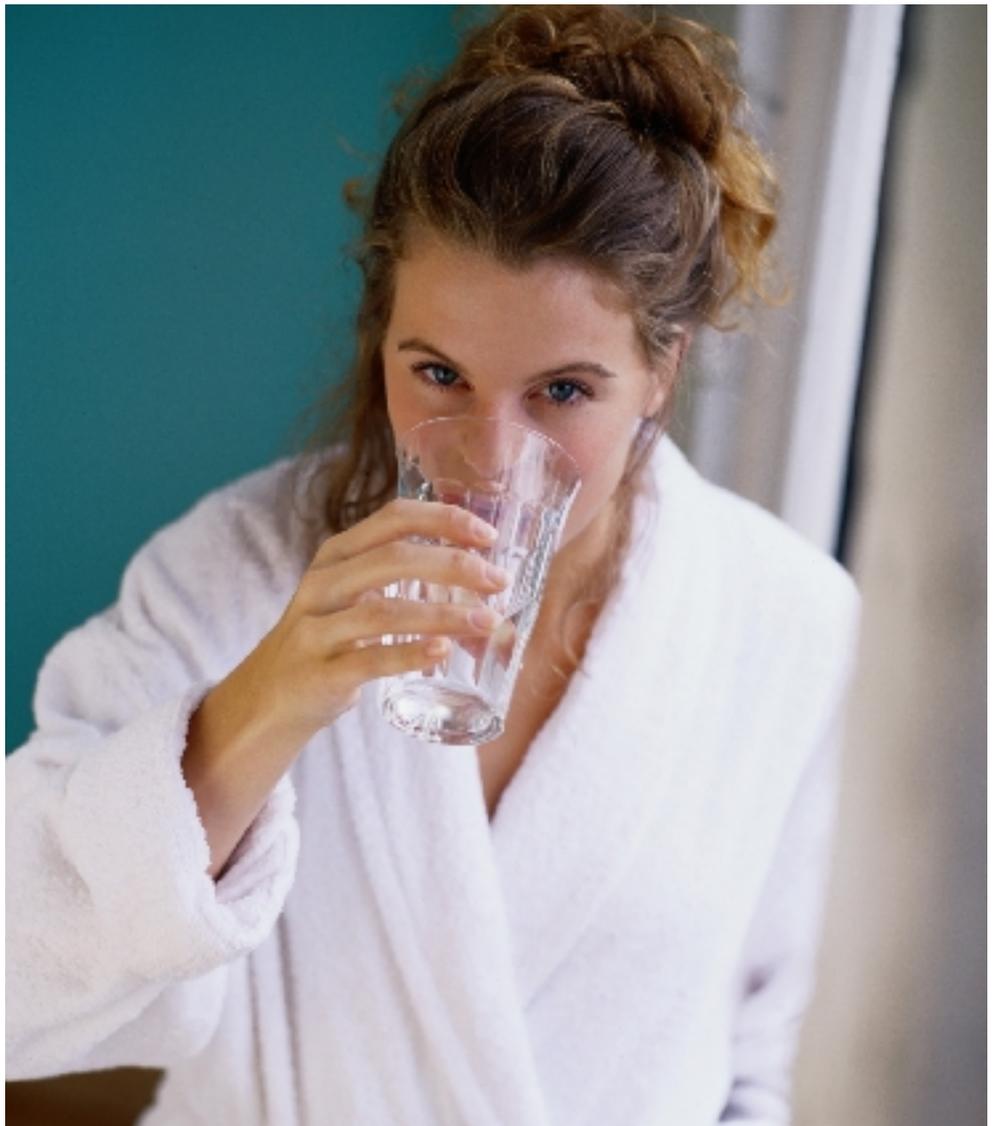
Furthermore, increased circulation of blood and lymph systems improves the condition of the body's largest organ -- the skin;

- Relaxes and softens injured and overused muscles;
- Reduces spasms and cramping;
- Increases joint flexibility;
- Reduces recovery time and helps prepare the body for strenuous workouts, reducing subsequent muscle pain of athletes at any level;
- Releases endorphins -- the body's natural painkiller -- and is proving very beneficial in patients with chronic illness, injury, and post-op pain;
- Reduces post-surgery adhesions and edema and can be used to reduce and

realign scar tissue after healing has occurred;

- Improves range-of-motion and decreases discomfort for patients with low back pain;
- Relieves pain for migraine sufferers and decreases the need for medication;
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles and reduces shortening of the muscles for those with restricted range of motion;
- Assists with shorter labor for expectant mothers, as well as reduces the need for medication, eases postpartum depression and anxiety, and contributes to a shorter hospital stay.

The benefits of massage are diverse. No matter how great it feels, massage isn't just a luxury; it's a health necessity.



To get the full benefits of massage, take it easy after your session and let it soak in.

# Lavender

## An Essential Oil for Fundamental Health

Laurie Chance Smith

Lavender essential oil is a one-stop medicine chest, helping to reduce anxiety, fatigue, and stress and balance hormones, increase the immune response, lower blood pressure, and relieve pain. To utilize lavender's healing benefits at home, mix five to 10 drops of lavender essential oil in one ounce of jojoba oil or unscented lotion. (Essential oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin; it's best to partner them with a carrier oil, liquid, or lotion.)

### EARACHES

For earaches, dab one drop of lavender massage oil behind the ear and rub gently. Alternatively, place one drop of lavender oil on a cotton ball and carefully place inside the outer ear.

### HEADACHES

Inhaling lavender is also effective for headache relief. Add a few drops to a bowl of warm water and breathe. Gently rub lavender massage lotion on the temples, forehead, and base of the neck.

### COLDS

Lavender oil can also help break up coughs and clear sinuses. Colorado-based holistic aromatherapist Nicola McGill suggests the regular home-use of antiseptic essential oils such as lavender to help avoid colds and other infectious diseases. Add a few drops to a vaporizer to help clear colds and infuse the home with lavender's scent.

### STRESS

At night, six to eight drops of lavender added to a warm bath helps melt away stress and relieve fatigue. Blend a footbath by adding three drops of lavender to a bowl of warm water, sink your feet in, and relax. For help inducing sleep, add two or three drops of lavender essential oil to the underside corner of your pillow.

### TRANQUIL AROMA

A human takes 23,040 breaths a day, and each inhale floods the system with scent. Rely on lavender's tranquil aroma to clear the way toward peaceful days.



Lavender is loaded with wellness properties.

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# Hot or Cold for Injuries?

## How to Know Which is Best for You

Art Riggs

We all know that treating an injury immediately after it happens can help minimize the pain and damage as well as facilitate recovery. But after rolling your ankle in a soccer game, or hurting your back when lifting your toddler, or tweaking your knee when stepping out of your car, what's best? Should you ice it to try to control inflammation, or would heat be better to promote circulation?

While it's difficult to establish a fail-safe rule for when to apply ice or heat, the general directive is to use ice for the first forty-eight to seventy-two hours after an acute injury and then switch to heat.

### It Depends

The reality is that many conditions are not necessarily the result of a specific

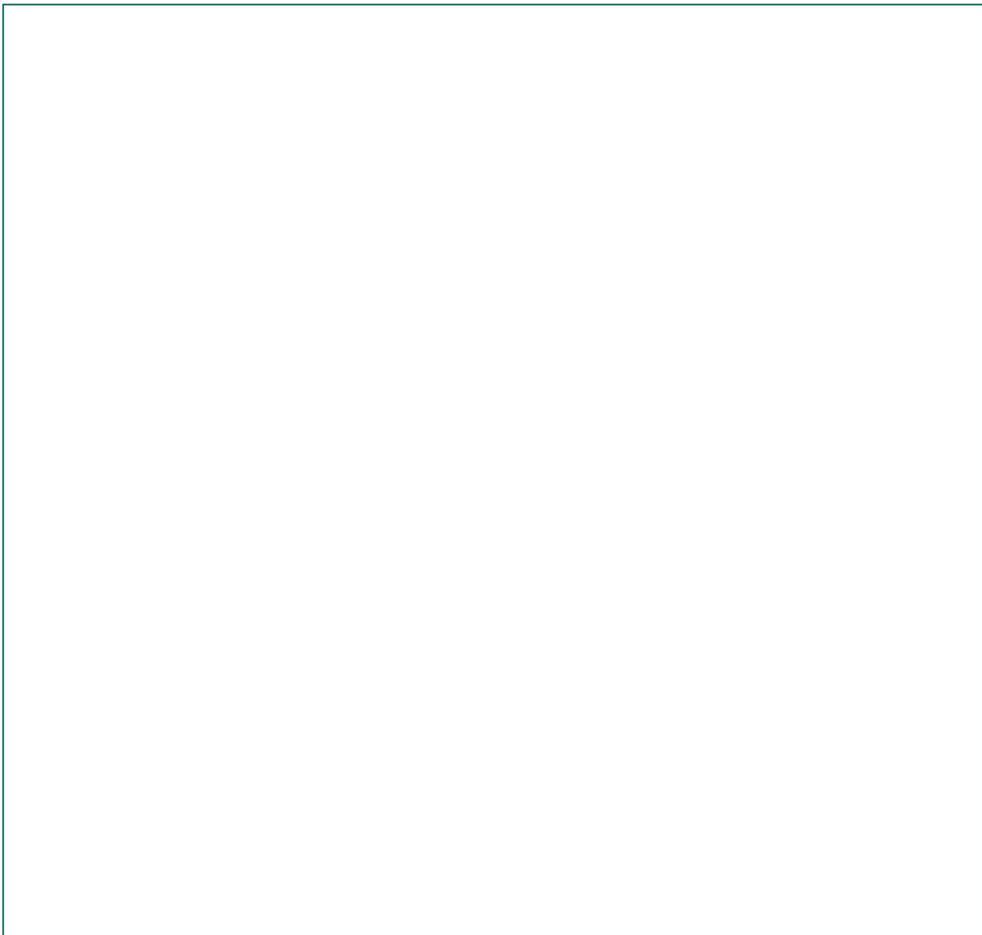
injury. I call these conditions "recurrent acute" and find them by far the most common: sciatica that occurs when you drive a car; a back that flare up every time you garden; or tennis elbow from intense computer work. In these cases, consistent and frequent applications of ice may prove very helpful over long periods of time, particularly immediately after experiencing the event that causes problems.

Conversely, back or other muscle spasms caused by overexertion rather than injury may benefit greatly from heat immediately upon the onset of symptoms or immediately after exercise in order to relax the muscles and increase circulation. Also, muscle belly pain not resulting from acute and

serious trauma generally responds well to heat, which can break the spasms and release the strain. On the other hand, nerve and tendon pain--regardless of the duration of symptoms, even if you've been experience them for months--benefit from ice.

### What Works for You

The bottom line: different individuals will constitutionally vary greatly in their reactions. Some people are more prone to the types of inflammation exacerbated by heat, while others find their bodies contracting and tightening at the mere mention of ice. Try each option and pay close attention to how your body and mind respond, and let your gut be your guide. Ultimately, what works best for you is, well, what's best for you.



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# Mix It Up! at Lake Martin

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