

Joe Linn Massage Newsletter

April 2014

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Back Pain and Massage

How Bodywork Can Help

Karrie Osborn

Whether it's a pulled muscle from yoga class or an afternoon basketball game, or a long-term pain caused by injury, most of us will come to know the beast that is called back pain. In fact, when it comes to low-back pain specifically, researchers say that 70-85 percent of the population will experience it at some point in their lives.

Causes of Pain

Experts say the cause of back pain can be the result of several factors. High on the list is stress. When our body is stressed, we literally begin to pull inward: the shoulders roll forward and move up to the ears, the neck disappears, and the back tightens in the new posture. "It's an

ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more can contribute to pain.

Geoffrey Bishop, owner of Stay Tuned Therapeutics in Flagstaff, Arizona, says mechanics is the main cause of back pain that he sees in his practice. "It's mechanics, including repetitive use and ignorance about preventative postures, and neglect by employers and employees to provide rest and recovery." The past also plays a part, he says. "Old injuries and traumatic events, left untreated and unresolved, seem to dictate where stress lands in the back as well."



Studies show that massage therapy helps reduce back pain more than some medications.

armoring effect," says Angie Parris-Raney, a Denver-based massage therapist who specializes in deep-tissue massage and sports therapy. "That protective mode, with the muscles in flex, can even result in visceral problems," she says, where the pain also affects internal organs.

In addition to stress, poor posture, bad

Massage Offers Hope

Those who suffer with back pain know there are no easy answers for chasing the pain away. Physical therapy has proven effective for some sufferers, as has chiropractic and acupuncture, but massage therapy is also making a name

Continued on page 2

*"Always
believe
something
wonderful is
about to
happen"*

-Unknown

Office Hours and Contact

Joe Linn Massage

Joe Linn

415-497-3176

By appointment only

Hours available Monday - Saturday

Call today to schedule your massage.

In this Issue

Back Pain and Massage

Footprints for Health

Fabulous Figs

Continued from page 1

for itself when it comes to providing relief. In fact, research has shown that massage can be a great friend to the back-pain sufferer.

"Massage therapists have long treated low-back pain safely and effectively," says Les Sweeney, president of Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals. "They have done so less expensively and less invasively than is possible with other treatments."

In fact, a study by the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle found that massage was more effective at treating low-back pain than medication. Patients who received massage once a week for 10 weeks were more likely to report that their back pain had improved, and improvements were still present six months after the study. Other research from the University of Miami School of Medicine and the Touch Research Institute showed that massage can decrease stress and long-term pain, improve sleep and range of motion, and help lower the incidence of depression and anxiety that often accompanies back pain.

For Parris-Raney's clients, the length of pain relief provided by massage therapy varies depending on the condition they are experiencing. Getting on a regular massage schedule, however, has really helped her clients manage the back pain, she says. When they go past their normally scheduled appointment, "their bodies know it's time to get a massage again." Whether it's just helping clients get through the day, or reminding the stressed-out office worker to breathe, Parris-Raney says massage can play an important part in back pain relief.

Whitney Lowe, owner of Oregon's Orthopedic Massage Education and Research Institute, says the benefits of massage for back pain depend on the primary cause of the pain. "If it is predominantly muscular pain, then massage has a great deal to offer in reducing pain associated with chronic muscle tightness, spasms, myofascial trigger points, or those types of problems. If it's something caused by a joint alignment problem or compression on a nerve, for example, then the role of massage might be somewhat different, such as helping to address the biomechanical dysfunctions,

but not really being able to get pressure off the nerve itself."

Massage Works

When it comes to back pain, there are a lot of options out there. Ultimately, massage, and its myriad benefits, might be a viable answer. For back pain sufferers, Parris-Raney says massage can work wonders. "Massage can help relax the body, relax the psyche, and improve a client's range of motion and circulation to the affected tissues," she says. Not only can massage help directly with the pain, but it can also make life a little easier, too. "Massage lets you tap into the parasympathetic system," she says, "and tap into all the good hormones that help you sleep better and help you handle stressors along the way." All of that helps in building a healthier back and a happier you.

Benefits of Massage

From stress relief to skin rejuvenation, the benefits of massage are extensive. When it comes to managing back pain, however, there are some specific benefits touch therapy can offer:

- Improved circulation. With increased circulation comes faster recovery time for sore, overworked muscle tissues.
- Increased release of endorphins. The prevalence of these natural painkillers is boosted every time you have a massage. This can only help in managing pain.
- Improved movement. Range of motion and flexibility both get a boost with massage.
- Increased relaxation. When you relax, your muscles relax, thereby calming the pain.



Be sure to communicate with your massage therapist if you are experiencing back pain.

Footprints for Health

You walk on them all day, but did you know your feet do more than carry you from one place to the next? They also have a unique connection to balanced health and well-being. In a form of bodywork known as reflexology, the feet are said to contain reflex areas that mirror and connect to all parts of the body--and pressure on these points can actually influence your state of health.

Reflexology is viewed primarily as a stress reduction or relaxation technique. Using the thumb, finger, and hand, gentle pressure is applied to reflex areas of the feet in order to decrease stress and bring the body into equilibrium.

Although simplistic in application, the effects of the treatment can be profound. Through activation of nerve receptors in the hands and feet, new messages flood into the body system, changing its tempo and tone. In essence, the foot or hand becomes a conduit for sharing information throughout the body. Function in the connecting area is

improved and, at the same time, the body experiences overall relaxation and benefits to the circulation and elimination systems. When the body's systems are at optimal functioning, self-healing is enhanced.

Scientific studies have documented the benefits of reflexology for a variety of ailments, ranging from reduction of pain, improvement in circulation, and release of tension, to improved effectiveness of medication, as well as benefits for diabetes and headaches.

In this sense, reflexology is not a medical treatment for specific symptoms or diseases, but rather a way to facilitate the body's inherent healing power.



Treat your feet, and body, to reflexology.

Fabulous Figs

This little known fruit is rich in beauty benefits

Shelley Burns

As one of the oldest fruits enjoyed by humans, figs have a known history dating back to 9200 BCE in the Middle East. Part of the fig's mythology was that it had medicinal properties, like building muscle, enhancing fertility, and increasing stamina. Figs were considered a valuable gift in ancient times because of beliefs about these and other medicinal benefits.

Figs are enjoyed in Mediterranean countries, a region that has one of the healthiest diets in the world. Mediterranean cultures appreciate the nutritional potential of the fig, the benefits of which have been overlooked far too long in North America.

Figs are being used today to hydrate skin and restore its elasticity and firmness. They also help prevent cracked lips and

premature wrinkling. Figs have excellent hydration properties, since each has a water content of approximately 3/4 of a cup.

Alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) is used to refresh and brighten skin and is often used as an ingredient in skin exfoliation. Figs have natural AHA properties, and when ingested, behave somewhat like internal exfoliants. They also promote healthy digestion.

This ancient fruit also contains ficin, an antioxidant enzyme more powerful than papain (the active ingredient in papaya) for its ability to repair skin and slow aging.

Dried figs consist of a great source of soluble and insoluble fiber. Insoluble fiber has been shown to reduce

low-density lipoprotein (LDL), better known as bad cholesterol. Keep in mind that dried figs are high in natural sugars and should be used with caution if you have high blood sugar levels or diabetes.

Update your thinking on figs. They are not only a great source of fiber, but they are also a wonderful skin-enhancing resource.

Shelley Burns, a doctor of naturopathic medicine, completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, and has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.

*If you can
imagine it, you
can achieve it.*

*If you can
dream it, you
can become it.*

-William A Ward

Happy Spring! I am hoping that we will get lots of showers this April so I can water my garden this summer. Water is so essential physically and environmentally. So keep your body hydrated and conserve water when you can. I am currently working on a gray water system for my washing machine. Wish me luck!

I hope you will enjoy the articles I have included in this newsletter. I found Back Pain and Massage to be very informative. It is such a good feeling to know that I can help people recover. Footprints for Health has a terrific introduction to reflexology, a technique that I often incorporate into the massages I provide. Fabulous Figs taught me just how good figs are for you. I planted a fig last year and it has started to produce fruit! I am very excited to make my favorite fig dish; cut figs in half, add a small amount of goat cheese, wrap in prosciutto then grill on a low heat while brushing with balsamic.

In closing I would like to thank you, my clients because I cannot do it without you!

Be Well,
Joe

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