

THE CENTER for CLINICAL MASSAGE

Ken Laymon

Massage erases pain

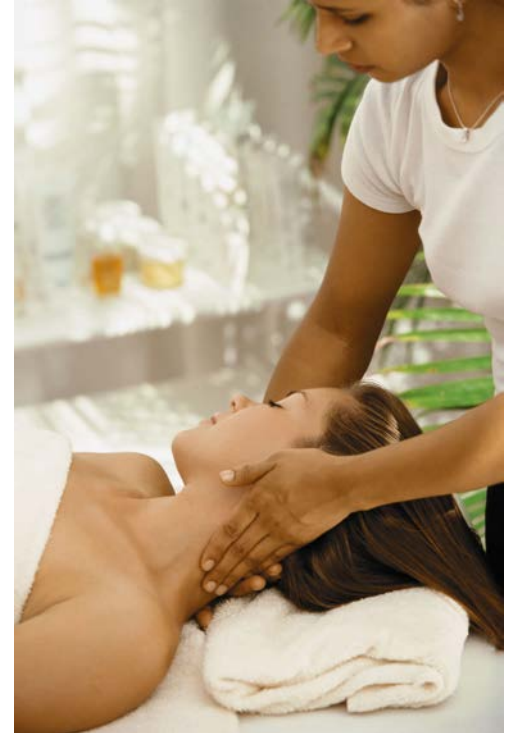
How does it work?

You know how much better you feel after a massage. How does it work?

- Massage stimulates release of natural pain-relievers such as endorphins.
- Massage stretches tight muscles and sends messages to the nervous system to relax.
- Massage increases circulation, which flushes irritating waste products and floods tight muscles with healing oxygen and nutrients.
- Massage releases trigger points, highly irritable spots that feel like lumps or knots, which send uncomfortable sensations to other parts of the body.
- Massage softens contracted muscles and their connective tissue coverings, called fascia. As a result, tension and spasms are often relieved.

- Massage helps you regain energy and restore normal movement. Feeling good will make you want to exercise, regaining your most important means for maintaining good circulation.
- Massage can improve your sleep, helping your body heal and rejuvenating you for each day's challenges.
- Massage helps you perceive and “listen” to your pain, which is, after all, a vital signal from our nervous system that we sit up and pay attention.

Follow-up massage in times of stress can help keep old pain from flaring up. Remember to schedule that next massage!



Massage relieves tension throughout the body and mind.

Prevent injuries in the yard and garden

Start slowly, get massage regularly



Wear warm layers and start slowly for work in the yard and garden.

When you go outside, it may be for vigorous activities like gardening, raking leaves, pruning or shoveling snow in winter. To help prevent soreness and injury, make sure your muscles are warm. Wear layers and start your activities slowly, gradually stepping up the pace.

Regular massage can also help prevent aches, pains and injuries. Massage stretches tight muscles and enhances circulation around the joints. So your body will be more prepared and less prone to injury when you go outside to bend, reach, twist and lift.

Research shows massage effective for back pain

A clinical trial at the Center for Health Studies, Group Health Seattle, showed massage produced a “substantial and persistent benefit” for low back pain sufferers during the 10-week study.

The use of pain medications went down as well. “The magnitude of this effect was quite surprising. Function is not an easy thing to improve in people with chronic back pain,” said Daniel Cherkin, PhD and acting director of the Center.

Massage improves immune function

Studies show benefit in different circumstances

There is mounting evidence that massage therapy supports the immune system. Research among groups of people in different situations showed that massage increased the activity of natural killer cells, white blood cells that can attack tumors.

Four studies completed by the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami Medical School demonstrated improvement in immune function after receiving massage.

The first TRI study examined the effects of massage on women with breast cancer. After 5 weeks of massage sessions, three times a week, natural killer cells increased and anxiety decreased by 50 percent. According to Tiffany Field, PhD and director of TRI, these women showed

a “whopping increase” in cells that attack tumors and infections.

In the second study, massage given to thirty HIV-positive men resulted in improvements for objective measurements in three areas — psychological, immunological, and endocrine functions.

Field believes that reduction of the stress response is what helps heal. “We know that cortisol [a stress hormone] kills off natural killer cells and in our studies we’re seeing an increase in these [natural killer] cells.” Similar results were reported with a group of HIV-positive children, and another with HIV-positive teenage girls.

Other research reported increased immune response with massage for a group of students preparing for exams. This supports the argument that massage improves the function of the immune system for healthy and ill alike, helping the body better fight disease.



The doctor of the future will give no medicine but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.

—Thomas A. Edison



Regular massage improved immunity and reduced anxiety in breast cancer patients.