

THE CENTER for CLINICAL MASSAGE

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The benefits of stress reduction

A positive cascade

Many studies of massage have shown its ability to decrease stress hormones and calm the nervous system. Dr. Tiffany Field, founder of the Touch Research Institute, University of Miami, has seen massage induce relaxation, resulting in a cascade of physical and emotional effects. All of these effects can bolster your health as well as your ability to cope with stress.

Increased feeling of well-being. Deep relaxation in addition to improved circulation results in the cleansing of waste products and improved nutrition to your cells. Increased energy, renewed optimism, and a tingling, balanced feeling can be the result.

Reduced anxiety. Increase relaxation and sense of well-being can make it easier to handle emotional stress and anxiety.

Reduced insomnia. Pregnant women, menopausal women, seniors, people suffering from fibromyalgia and anyone experiencing stress or pain may find their normal sleep patterns disrupted. Deep relaxation from massage contributes to deeper and more restorative sleep.

Improved digestion. Excess stress can result in abdominal tension. As it relaxes, massage can indirectly help with the constipation, gas, and heartburn associated with pregnancy, aging, or illness.

Recovery from surgery. Massage can help reduce anxiety and tension before surgery. Afterward, avoiding the area of surgery, overall massage can help assist the flow of nutrition to cells and the removal of wastes, resulting in faster, more efficient healing.

Reduced mental fatigue, confusion. Hospital employees reported feeling less confusion after brief chair massage. With improved circulation, the flow of oxygen to the brain is improved, temporarily increasing mental clarity.



When you relax with massage, you can sleep better, handle stress more easily and even feel sharper.

Improved immune function. Study after study of massage is demonstrating that massage boosts the immune system, helping to both heal and prevent disease.



Because massage reduces both stress and tension, headaches may be prevented as well as relieved.

Massage offers headache relief

Evidence backs up client experience

Research published in the *International Journal of Neuroscience*, the *American Journal of Public Health*, and *Journal of Child Neurology* indicates that massage can reduce the occurrence and frequency of tension and migraine headaches. This supports the experience of many massage clients who report a decrease in both headaches and headache pain.

How does massage help?

Massage relaxes tense muscles. When tension held in the muscles of the head, shoulders, and neck eases, there is less pressure on the nerves and blood vessels that supply them. Blood flow improves and muscle spasms are often relieved.

Massage therapy often reduces the anxiety and mental stress that can accompany headaches, too. As overall stress eases and muscle tension that can trigger headaches lessens, headaches can be prevented as well as relieved.

These factors add up to relief of tension or migraine headaches.

Massage and posture

The benefits of standing tall

A good posture doesn't mean "perfect" posture. Most people vary from perfect posture due to birth trauma, injuries or other reasons, but everyone can strive for a flexible, aligned body that moves easily.

Why should you care?

Here are four reasons for desiring optimum posture.

1. Because hunching your neck and shoulders and slouching your back eventually leads to tightness and pain, you will simply feel better if you sit straight and tall.
2. Stooping restricts your ability to breathe deeply, and the oxygen we take in with our breath is essential to feeling energetic and well.
3. Better posture will allow you to enjoy moving with more ease in your favorite recreational activities.



Massage can help restore good posture, leading to easier movement in the activities you love.

4. Better posture allows you to feel supported by your bones, rather than needing to call on your muscles to keep you in alignment as you move.

How can massage help?

Body awareness. Massage often increases bodily awareness. Becoming aware of how you hunch your neck and shoulders, for example, and what it feels like when they are aligned and relaxed, can be a first step to easing into better posture.

Physical release. Massage helps restore normal posture by stretching shortened muscles and fascia, freeing movement around the joints with range of motion exercises, and relieving muscle contractions. Relieving pain and tightness can result in the release of protective habits like hunching or favoring an area, and help you feel taller and more alive.

Relieving emotional stress. When stress or an emotion like anger makes you hunch or tighten up, massage can help you feel better — your good feelings of energy and balance can be restored before constricted emotional "postures" become chronic.



*Man is ill because he is never still.
—Paracelsus, Medieval Physician*