



# Staying in Touch®

## How are things going?

Are you finding time to take proper care of yourself?

If you asked most massage therapists what they wished all their clients truly understood, it might be just how much regular massage can benefit their health and outlook on life.

It's hard for any of us to comprehend all the complex functions that our bodies' systems are performing every instant of our lives.

This month's article shares further insight into a few of the many ways regular massage can help your body re-set itself and contribute to your present and future health.

Health experts remind us that to stay healthy we need nutritious food, plenty of pure water, regular exercise, and sufficient sleep.

Read on to discover more reasons massage supports the well-being of your body, mind and spirit.

We're heading into that time of year with Mother's Day, Father's Day, and graduation just around the corner. Remember those special folks in your life with a massage gift certificate.

Make the most of your life by keeping massage a priority. See you soon!

## 6 Healthy Ways Getting a Massage Benefits Your Entire Body

By Brielle Gregory

When it comes to relaxation, there are a few things we all associate with it: spa days, cozying up by the fire, staying in bed until 2 p.m. and, of course, getting a massage. And although massage is great for helping you relax, it has more therapeutic benefits, too.

The benefits of massage really come down to one thing: pressure. "The skin is moved during a moderate pressure massage, which results in a calming and slowing of the nervous system," says Tiffany Field, PhD, director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine. And that slowing of the nervous system leads to other physiological effects, too, like a decrease in heart rate, lowered blood pressure, and changes in EEG patterns (electrical activity in your brain), says Field.

Here are six of massage therapy's biggest benefits to know about:

**Relieve anxiety**—If you suffer with anxiety, one study suggests that a massage can actually help significantly reduce your symptoms. "What we think is going on is it's decreasing the sympathetic tone that we see with people with generalized anxiety disorder and increasing this sort of parasympathetic response," says Emory Healthcare's Dr. Mark Rapaport, who led the study.

Your body actually has two different nervous systems: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. "Your sympathetic is fight or flight," says Rudy Gehrman, DC, a sports medicine chiropractor and founder of Physio Logic in New York. "If you're getting chased by a lion, that's your sympathetic nervous system."

During a massage, however, your parasympathetic (or calming) response is increased, which results in a decrease in anxiety, says Dr. Rapaport.

And equally great news? Those effects of massage on decreased anxiety can actually be long-lasting. "We did an informal follow-up, and a significant number of these people remained anxiety-free anywhere from six months to 18 months later," says Dr. Rapaport.

**Sleep more soundly**—Have trouble sleeping or suffer from insomnia? Massage can actually help you sleep more deeply. "Sleep is all related to how much activity there is in the nervous system," says Field. And when you get a massage, your nervous system itself actually slows down due to the pressure.

Plus, when you're getting deeper, more restorative sleep, she says, that in turn reduces your levels of substance P (a neurotransmitter for pain), which reduces overall pain. So if you have any aches, massage will do double-duty.

**Fight fatigue**—We've all been there: You've been tossing and turning all night, work has been completely draining, and you feel like you don't even have five minutes to take a deep breath. "Some people get fatigued because they're not sleeping enough," says Dr. Rapaport. "Other people are getting fatigued because of some biological factors."



(See **6 Benefits of Massage ...** on back)

## 6 Benefits of Massage ...

(continued from front)

But no matter what the cause of your fatigue is, one easy solution is (you guessed it) a massage. In fact, one 2018 study led by Dr. Rapaport found that breast cancer survivors who received weekly Swedish massages experienced a reduction in their fatigue, a particularly debilitating effect of the disease. To get the best effects, based on Dr. Rapaport's study, try getting a massage once per week.

### Aid certain health conditions—

Your body has two different immune responses: Th1 and Th2, and they need to be in balance in order to have your immune system working optimally, says Field. "If the Th2 gets in excess of the Th1 system, then you have autoimmune problems," she says.

But during massage, you're slowing down stress hormones to help maintain this balance, she says. In turn, this can help make autoimmune conditions like asthma, type 1 diabetes, or dermatitis, more manageable through things like decreased pain or fatigue.

**Boost focus—**Have trouble staying present in a meeting for more than 10 minutes or reading a book before bed? The effects of a massage will actually help improve your attention and ability to focus.

That's because in order for you to best pay attention, your heart rate needs to be lowered. "If I'm not paying attention, it's usually because my heart rate's elevated," says Field. "And when I get my heart rate down, I'll be more attentive."

Because a massage slows your nervous system, your heart rate is effectively slowed down, too. During a massage, your pressure receptors stimulate vagal activity, which stems from a nerve in your brain that leads to several different branches of the body, including the heart, says Field. So when you're undergoing the pressure of a massage, it could decrease your heart rate, as well, which ultimately will improve your focus.

**Heal injuries—**If you experience an injury or joint pain (especially if the problem is long-term or chronic), says Gehrman, you'll also have what are called soft-tissue restrictions, which cause knots or trigger points of pain. "Massage therapists are getting rid of soft-tissue restrictions and increasing circulation," he says.

Those restrictions can, over time, lead to problems like joint decay or other ligament problems, so by actively massaging out those soft-tissue restrictions, you're not only helping your current injury, but also helping prevent against other problems down the road.

Source: [www.prevention.com](http://www.prevention.com)

**Make Mom feel extra special this year on Mother's Day with a relaxing massage gift certificate!**

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**The groundwork of all happiness is health.**

**—Leigh Hunt**

*The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.*