



Staying in Touch®

Holiday Greetings!

Are you ready to embrace the new year? The next few weeks can be a good time to evaluate where you are as this year comes to an end and to begin planning your direction for the coming months.

If your life keeps you on the go much of the time, taking the time to prioritize your goals and adjust your schedule can reduce your stress levels and keep you more in charge of your life.

This month's lead article comes from a massage therapy practice in New England and shares some of the specific benefits regular massage can provide to you. Sometimes a different point of view can reveal a new depth of understanding, so check it out.

We read how massage can relieve stress, improve sleep, etc., but the actual health benefits we receive aren't always obvious. The article on sleep can give you an idea of just how much your regular massages are doing to improve and maintain your health. As time goes on, more studies like this one should make it clear that massage can be a real life changer!

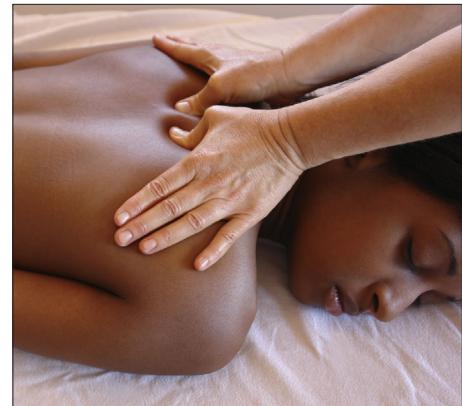
Enjoy the rest of your holidays, visiting with friends, family, and loved ones. See you soon!

How Does Regular Massage Help You?

Promotes Muscle Relaxation—The purpose of massage therapy is to target the source of the body's pain by addressing tense muscles, increasing flexibility, and providing relaxation to the affected muscles as well as the body as a whole. Massage also promotes circulation to the affected or injured muscles, which increases nutrients and oxygen to the damaged tissues. In turn, this increased activity reduces stiffness and swelling in the muscles and joints, as well as increasing flexibility to help reduce pain.

Can Help Improve Circulation—The long-term benefits of massage therapy are not to be underestimated. Improved circulation is part of a snowball effect that occurs from receiving regular massage therapy. Proper circulation brings damaged, stiff, and tense muscles the rich blood supply they need to promote healing.

Can Help Improve Posture—Many people experience back, neck, and muscle pain from a variety of sources. The primary cause of this pain is often poor posture. In fact, chronic back pain—which is the number one reason for missed work days and the second most common cause of disability—is often the result of incorrect or poor posture while standing and/or sitting. Additionally, being overweight or repetitive movements can contribute to the strain on the back and other problem areas. As a result, the added strain often causes spasms, pain, and tense muscles in the hips, glutes, back, neck, and legs.



Can Help Strengthen the Body's Immune System—Regular massage sessions provide many benefits to the human body. Those who experience high levels of stress are more vulnerable to illness and injury. When stress is combined with sleep disturbances and poor nutrition, it adversely affects the body's immune system, which can greatly reduce its ability to naturally protect against infections, pathogens, and bacteria. Studies have indicated that regular massage sessions not only help reduce stress, but can also boost the immune system's effectiveness and enhance the body's ability to deliver nourishment. Much like regular exercise can keep the body fine-tuned, regular massage therapy can help keep the immune system strong and resilient.

Source: santaclaritamagazine.com

Neurological Night Shift: Immune Cells Rewire, Repair Our Brains As We Sleep *by John Anderer*

On a conscious level, sleep is an opportunity to leave our thoughts behind and rest up. But, on a subconscious level, our brains keep on working. Vivid dreams are just one prime example of the fact that our brains never really shut down. Now, new research

See **Night Shift ...** (*continued on back*)

Night Shift . . .

(continued from front)

reveals another important neurological function being taken care of while we hit the pillow: immune cells called microglia are primarily active while we sleep, reorganizing nerve cell connections, repairing damage, and fighting infections.

The study, conducted at the University of Rochester Medical Center using lab mice, will help scientists and doctors better understand brain plasticity, or the human brain's ability to change and evolve in response to experiences. Additionally, these findings have far-reaching implications in reference to diseases like autism, schizophrenia, and dementia, all of which are associated with an individual's brain not functioning properly. This discovery also sheds some light on the human brain's ability to fight infections and repair damage following a stroke or other major injury.

"It has largely been assumed that the dynamic movement of microglial processes is not sensitive to the behavioral state of the animal," explains lead author Dr. Ania Majewska, a professor in the University of Rochester Medical Center's (URMC) Del Monte Institute for Neuroscience, in a release.

"This research shows that the signals in our brain that modulate the sleep and awake state also act as a switch that turns the immune system off and on."

Microglia are incredibly important to our brains' wellbeing, effectively acting as emergency first responders who are always on call. They patrol the brain and spinal cord and immediately take action if they detect any infections, debris, or dead cell tissue. While scientists have known this about microglia for some time, it was discovered much more recently that these immune cells also play a big role in plasticity.

To put it succinctly, the research team

discovered that microglia are much more active and beneficial as we are sleeping, and tend to hibernate or become inactive while we are awake due to the presence of norepinephrine.

Overall, this research adds another element to the already strong argument that sleep is absolutely essential to a healthy brain and mental state. Furthermore, these discoveries may also help explain the relationship between constant lack of sleep and an increased risk of conditions like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

The study is published in the scientific journal *Nature Neuroscience*.

Source: studyfinds.org

**Doing some last-minute holiday shopping?
How about a massage gift certificate?
Nothing offers a greater reward than
the gift of health and well-being.**

Holiday shopping made easy — Call today!

A loving heart is the truest wisdom.

—Charles Dickens

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