



Staying in Touch®

Ready for Autumn?

With the summer months nearly in the rearview mirror, are you ready to merge into the fast lane heading toward Autumn and the rapidly approaching holiday season?

It always feels like the pace of life picks up the tempo this time of year. The to-do list gets a little longer and the project deadlines come a little quicker.

Massage is great any time, but you can really appreciate the boost it can offer when life gets more hectic and stressful.

Particularly beneficial are the ways it can strengthen the immune system and improve the quality of sleep. Remember that stress underlies most illness and disease, so plan to stay healthier with massage.

Many things can contribute to aches and tension; see this month's lead article to review a few of the reasons your regular massage sessions can keep you at your best.

This issue's other article reviews results of a recent study on how sleep can help you sort out problems more efficiently—check it out!

Have a great month; see you soon for your next massage!

Back pain? Massage could be the key to pain relief *By Anne Chao*

The reason behind the rise in support for massage therapy to relieve back pain is simple: it works.

Back pain, especially low back pain, is a very common complaint among adults. Most adults report experiencing back pain at some point in their lives.

Anyone who suffers from back pain knows that even easy tasks can become difficult and painful, including bending over, tying shoelaces and lying down comfortably.

Massage therapy is clinically proven to decrease tension in the back and neck. Numerous studies suggest massage therapy relieves back pain and reduces inflammation.

A study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* determined that low back pain sufferers who received one hour of weekly massage therapy for 10 weeks felt less pain than the group who had physical therapy and pain management. The benefits of these regular massage treatments relieved pain for up to 6 months or more.

Another study from the University of Kentucky and Indiana University showed similar results. Of the 104 individuals with persistent low back pain more than 50 percent of participants reported improvement after 10 massage therapy sessions over 12 weeks with a professional massage therapist. After 24 weeks, 75 percent of the group said that they still felt better.

Working regular massage into your wellness plan improves how you feel for many reasons.

Massage treatments are designed to stretch and knead various layers of muscles and tendons. These movements break up the muscle knots and fibers, which provides relief.

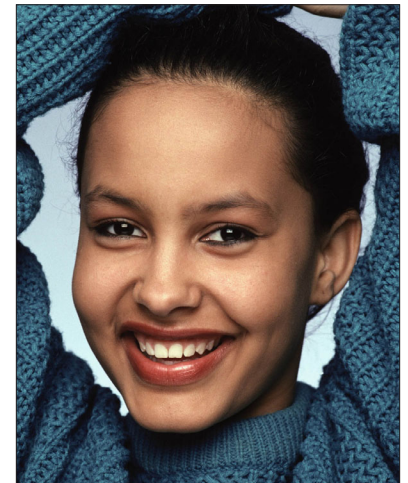
Massage increases blood flow, helps muscles to recover more quickly and reduces soreness. Additionally, researchers believe that the benefits of massage reach beyond physical activity, because studies show that massage therapy improves vascular function for both active and inactive people.

Massage therapy releases endorphins, or "happy" hormones, which create a feeling of well-being and happiness. This phenomenon reduces pain levels, too. Just 15 minutes of massage therapy can result in up to two days of feeling good.

It can take weeks or even months to completely recover from a flare-up of back pain. In the meantime, massage offers relief in addition to conventional care, such as taking anti-inflammatory pain relievers, staying as active as possible, getting physical therapy, and waiting for the body to heal.

Regular massage therapy sessions are important to achieve optimal results.

Source: www.delmartimes.net



Sleep On It: Taking Naps Helps Us Make Wiser Decisions, Study Finds

by Ben Renner

“I’ll sleep on it” is a phrase largely used to procrastinate a bit before making a decision, but a new study out of the United Kingdom finds that a daytime nap before a big decision may just be a scientifically sound strategy. Researchers from the University of Bristol say that naps can help people efficiently weigh the pros and cons of a decision, gain insight, and even process unconscious information.

The results of the study indicated that short bouts of sleep can benefit cognitive brain function, and help us process information that we normally aren’t aware of while conscious.

Previous studies had already established that getting more sleep helps us process information and make decisions. However, it was still unclear if people have to actually be aware of the information they are processing in order to reap the benefits of sleep.

In order to address this, researchers hid information presented to

participants in the study by “masking” it, so it was never consciously perceived. However, this masked information was still processed by participants’ unconscious minds.

Both before and after any naps, researchers measured changes in brain activity by measuring electrical activity using an EEG. Those who took naps performed the masked primary task much faster after sleeping, while those who stayed awake showed no improvement. These results suggest that sleep does in fact help the brain process unconscious information.

Additionally, researchers say their findings indicate that even a small

amount of sleep will help response time and help people make decisions in general. The study’s authors even went so far as to say that these results point to the human mind processing information gathered while awake in a much deeper way during sleep that is still a mystery to modern science.

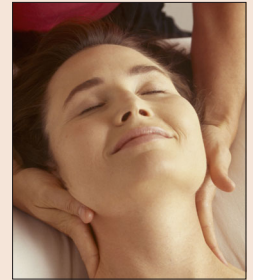
“The findings are remarkable in that they can occur in the absence of initial intentional, conscious awareness, by processing of implicitly presented cues beneath participants’ conscious awareness,” explains Dr Liz Coulthard.

The study is published in the *Journal of Sleep Research*.

Source: www.studyfinds.org

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—Anne Wilson Schaefer

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