



# Staying in Touch®

## Here Comes Spring!

It's that time of year when we tend to increase our physical activities, so pace yourself. Also, plan your next massage to help your muscles adjust.

Possibly the greatest threat to your health and happiness is stress. This is why we therapists devote so much time discussing it—it's that important!

If you understand the basics of stress and how to cope with it, you stand a better chance of staying healthy as the years roll by. This month's issue addresses these basics and how massage can help you.

In today's world, the stressors just keep on coming. When we follow health news such as the recent coronavirus outbreak; as well as the uncertain political and economic future; climate change; and all of life's surprises, it's no wonder stress is a constant threat.

Fortunately, regular massage is an excellent way to handle stress and keep it at bay. So while you watch your diet and get adequate exercise, rely on your massage sessions to help maintain a higher level of health and quality of life.

Keep making massage a healthy priority in your life; see you soon for your next appointment!

## Conquer Stress to Feel Your Best!

Stress is any change in the environment that requires your body to react and adjust in response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses.

Stress is the body's natural defense against predators and danger. It flushes the body with hormones to prepare systems to evade or confront danger.

When we are faced with a challenge, part of our response is physical. The body activates resources to protect us by preparing us either to stay and fight or to get away as fast as possible.

The body changes in the following ways during stress:

- ^ **Blood pressure and pulse rate rise**
- ^ **Breathing is faster**
- ^ **The digestive system slows down**
- ^ **Immune activity decreases**
- ^ **The muscles become tense**
- ^ **A heightened state of alertness prevents sleep**



Chronic stress is the most harmful type of stress and grinds away over a long period. It occurs when a person never sees an escape from the cause of stress and stops seeking solutions. Chronic stress can continue unnoticed, as people can become used to it.

A persistently negative response to challenges can have a detrimental effect on health and happiness. However, being aware of how you react to stressors can help reduce the negative feelings and effects of stress, and to manage it more effectively.

### How Does Stress Affect Health?

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, such as a getting a job promotion. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between challenges. As a result, the person becomes overworked and stress-related tension builds.

Distress can lead to physical symptoms including headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping. Research suggests that stress also can bring on or worsen certain symptoms or diseases.

- ^ Forty-three percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress.
- ^ 75% to 90% of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints.
- ^ Stress can play a part in problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety.
- ^ Stress costs American industry more than \$300 billion annually.

Sources: [webmd.com](http://webmd.com); [medicalnewstoday.com](http://medicalnewstoday.com)

## Beware chronic stress!

When we're unable to predict and control what is happening to us, our body goes into a state of increased alertness. And these stressors can happen all the time—triggering the body's stress response over and over again.

When the stress response becomes prolonged (chronic), it has a very different effect than acute stress has. In many cases, the body's system controlling the stress response is no longer able to return to its normal state. This long-term stress can contribute to both physical and mental illness through effects on the heart, immune and metabolic functions, and hormones acting on the brain.

Repeated stress changes how well these systems are able to control the stress response.

Another link between stress and mental health is the immune system. During the stress response, the immune system is activated, helping to keep us safe. But chronic stress and prolonged activation of the immune system could negatively affect how the brain functions.

**Source:** [mqmentalhealth.org](http://mqmentalhealth.org)

## Massage Therapy for Stress Relief and Sleep

Recent research suggests that the symptoms of stress, as well as anxiety and depression, may be directly affected with massage therapy.

Studies show that massage therapy can reduce stress significantly on physical and psychological levels including decreased blood pressure and heart rate, as well as significant changes in emotional states.

According to an AMTA Consumer Survey, 28% of individuals claim their primary reason for receiving a massage in the previous 12 months was stress related.

**Source:** [amtamassage.org](http://amtamassage.org)

The National Institutes of Health has advised that massage therapy can reduce fatigue and improve sleep and, based on research gathered by the American Massage Therapy Association, massage has been shown to improve sleep in infants, children, adults, and the elderly alike, as well as individuals with cancer, fibromyalgia, heart disease, lower back pain, cerebral palsy, and breast disease.

**Source:** [sleepreviewmag.com](http://sleepreviewmag.com)



**Celebrate the coming of Spring  
with a massage gift certificate  
for that special person in your  
life! Call today to order ...**

**The greatest of follies is to sacrifice health  
for any other kind of happiness.**

**—Arthur Schopenhauer**

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