



# In Touch Newsletter

Empowering a Healthy Lifestyle  
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## Massage relaxes, promotes healing Revered through the ages

Throughout human history, massage was used for everything from stiff, painful muscles to chronic disease. In China, medical texts refer to it as early as 3000 B.C.

Today massage therapy is being used by a wide range of people as a pain reliever, antidote to stress, and enhancer of athletic performance. A survey conducted by the American Massage Therapy Association showed that 25 million more Americans received massage in the year 2006 than they did in 1996.

Doctors are referring patients for massage as well. Andrew Weil, MD and author of *Spontaneous Healing* said, “[Massage] works on the premise ... that the body can heal itself if given a chance. Massage nurtures the body’s talent for healing by triggering and supporting the body’s own healing response.”

Recent research has shown that massage lowers blood pressure, increases circulation, relaxes muscles and improves range of motion. What’s more, it reduces the effects of stress and can ease the impulse to tighten in response to pain. Because of these results, many people are finding that massage helps them heal faster from injuries and disease.

Studies also demonstrate that the benefits of regular massage tend to accumulate, easing long-term tension, conditioning tissues to help prevent injury, and enhancing your ability to breathe more deeply and relax more fully. ❖



Regular massage can ease chronic tension and condition tissues to prevent injury.



## Aromatherapy, the art of scent Essential oils can boost your mood, relieve stress

Aromatherapy is the application of essential oils through baths, spa treatments, facials or massage. Essential oils are distilled from plants — such as lavender, eucalyptus and peppermint — which give the oils their fragrances and therapeutic qualities.

Research on the sense of smell has shown that scent is perceived by the part of the brain connected with emotion, and that a scent that pleases you or is associated with a happy event will increase your feeling of well-being. That effect can be heightened when essential oils, easily added to massage oils and creams, are combined with massage.

According to Peter and Kate Damian, authors of *Aromatherapy: Scent and Psyche — Using Essential Oils for Physi-*

*cal and Emotional Well-Being*, jasmine, lavender, neroli (orange blossom), and rose are effective in reducing anxiety. These oils in addition to clary sage are helpful for panic and soothing the nerves. Jasmine and lavender as well as basil are believed to help improve sleep. While certified aromatherapists focus solely on the use of essential oils, other professionals such as estheticians, spa professionals and massage therapists often enhance their services with the wonderful properties of these oils. ❖

Plants such as lavender give essential oils their concentrated fragrances.



## Massage for back pain Study shows long-term benefits

Research has shown massage to be very effective in reducing low-back pain. One study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* followed back-pain sufferers who participated in three different groups receiving either massage, acupuncture, or educational information. After ten weeks, the massage group reported a 47% improvement, while the acupuncture group improved by 38% and the educational group improved by 27%. The study showed that the benefits of massage lasted far longer than the post-massage feeling of relaxation. Even a year after the study was finished, the massage group maintained benefits.

### *How does massage reduce back pain?*

Massage eases tension and muscle spasm. As the muscles relax, circulation increases, bringing healing oxygen to the tissues. Certain massage techniques release painful trigger points, and increase flexibility and mobility in the body.



*Studies show massage yields significant and long-lasting improvement for back-pain sufferers.*

Massage therapists are trained to be sensitive in dealing with sore, painful tissues. If you have back pain, the goal will be to work well within your pain threshold, gently encouraging relaxation in the back, and throughout the body. Imagine how much better your back, and your body overall, could feel with improved blood flow to the muscles, decreased tension and trigger points, increased relaxation and easier movement. ❖



*The more high technology around us, the more the need for human touch.*

*—John Naisbitt,  
Author of Megatrends*