

## The Power of Touch

We underestimate the power of touch. The best part of visiting the hairdresser is the wonderful head massage during the wash - it is one enjoyable way of receiving the soothing art of touch. Touch is such a powerful healer that we go to professional "touchers" (doctors, hairdressers, masseuses, chiropodists and reflexologists.) We know that a doctor cannot help much when we have a minor affliction (the common cold for example), but we will go anyway just to be patted, listened to and to receive some sympathy.

Studies have shown that loving touch alone, in whatever style, can improve health. Due to busy lifestyles in this day and age, we compensate the art of touch:- cuddles and kisses for our children are replaced with teddy bears and blankets. When touch isn't there, isolation comes through.

The most professional kind of touch (that we would recognise as professional touch), is the massage - although massage is still viewed by some people with suspicion. It is common to see the "nudge nudge, wink wink" reaction from people when they hear of a person visiting a masseur although, nine out of ten pain clinics in the UK have a massage practitioner.

Massage is one of the oldest known healing arts. Recorded history shows that the Orientals were using massage at least three thousand years before the birth of Christ. The oldest existing medical text the "Nei Ching" acknowledges it as one of the four classical forms of medical treatments, along with acupuncture, moxibustion and herbalism. In England, Mary Queen of Scots, recovered from a grave illness with the help of massage and Captain Cook recorded how in 1779, his painful sciatica was cured when twelve women from Tahiti massaged him from head to foot.

The chief effect of massage is on the circulation and, in turn, can influence the various tissues and organs of the body. Minor aches and pains caused by nervous tension can be soothed and massaged away as the sense of relaxation sweeps over the body. Disease or injury can affect the muscles and therefore muscular activity is reduced. This will cause swelling which will interrupt the circulation. By the proper application of massage, the

swelling can be reduced and ultimately restoring normal circulation of the blood and lymph. Used with acupuncture, the results can have outstanding synergistic effects.

Massage is a wonderful form of treatment for anyone whether it be for an injury or just the need to relax and be pampered. **Babies** love to be massaged, it is very calming and aids the bonding between parent and child. The **elderly** find it beneficial because of the effect massage has on the circulation and by breaking down minor adhesions this can help relieve stiffness. **Sportsmen/women**, massage can prepare healthy muscles for strenuous sporting activities or provide relief following an injury because massage will soothe and relieve spasm and thereby relieve pain, reduce swelling, relax muscles and speed the healing process. **People who are confined to bed** have poor circulation and can become stiff and sore. Massage will stimulate the circulation, dilate the blood vessels and help to clean toxins from the body. **Anxiety, Tension, headaches;** For most people with these conditions, massage acts as a sedative and has a good effect on the central nervous system of the body.

Of course, the most important ingredient in massage is the skilled hands of a trained masseur and for most individuals, massage acts as a sedative, reducing anxiety and tension. As an Acupuncturist I think it is very important to incorporate massage with the acupuncture to give the overall healing effect.

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