

MASSAGE FEATURE

Whether you choose a massage for deep relaxation, or to help in your healing programme for more serious injuries and illnesses, massage can truly be gift to yourself. Aberdeen-based yoga teacher Rachel Lightbird takes a look at the many and varied benefits of touch, and touch-therapies in the Aberdeen area.

Anything that promotes groans of happiness, and sighs of deep contentment, has got to be worth a try and most forms of massage practically guarantee you a great big 'aaaahh' as your body and mind at least temporarily release the stresses and strains of modern day life.

At the end of the day, feeling good is a physical phenomena, which takes place in your body. The contentment and satisfaction we all seek takes place at a cellular level. We feel it as the result of the release of feel-good hormones into our systems, for example serotonin. Massage is a simple and effective way to get the body to release these hormones, without you having **TO DO** anything, except lie there and feel relaxed.

Experiments show that when baby monkeys are deprived of touch, yet fed and looked after in every other way they die - 100% of the time. It could very well be that, like our close cousins the primates, the caring touch of another human being is actually necessary for our health and well-being, if not our very survival.

Stress has become the modern day neurosis of Western Living. Studies show that we may very easily actually get addicted to the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline, that course round our system, when we feel under pressure. Headless chicken living is rewarded, both in our work environments, and by ourselves. It makes us feel important and needed, if we have been very busy, while taking time out for ourselves is actually promoted as lazy or selfish, except in the smallest quantities.

The cost of this stress epidemic is high Statistics show that, in the UK 1 in 2 people will suffer from heart disease, and 1 in three from cancer, with Scotland topping the unhealthy living leagues in Europe.

Yet, while we still run around like lunatics, not taking out time to rejuvenate our hearts and souls, and making sure we get back the energy we need to

stay healthy and vital as we live our busy lives, we can only expect to get sicker, not healthier as a nation . Studies pinpoint stress as a causal factor in both heart disease and cancer.

Intelligently managing the stress of everyday life using tools like massage can help you not get sick in the first place. And, if you are already sick, massage can be a very effective way of helping you heal everything from sports injuries, to rheumatoid arthritis.

Taken regularly, and along side other factors such as improving your diet, a suitable exercise regime, and managing negative emotions, massage can significantly increase your energy levels, alertness, and general zest for life. It can improve your posture, help you sleep better, and even give your skin a healthy glow, and make you feel younger.

By nurturing well-being and fitness in a sustainable way, massage helps you create and restore balance, integrity and wellness, on all levels of your being. At the very least, treating yourself to a soothing, relaxing massage, will give your body deep pleasure, help your mind unwind, and put a different perspective on your life - at least for an hour or two.

Types of massage

There are many different types of massage available in Aberdeen, so shop around and find the one that is best for you. A few styles to look for are Shiatsu, Swedish, Remedial or Sports massage and aromatherapy. You could also choose Rolfing, reflexology, and even hotstone massage therapies.

Each is very different. A good massage therapist may use many different styles and gear the massage toward your needs.

Shiatsu.

Based on traditional Chinese medicine practices that focuses on working the energetic meridians, Shiatsu is becoming increasingly popular in the West. For a Shiatsu massage, you don't have to take your clothes off, good if you do not like showing your body to strangers. Like other work with touch, it offers comfort, and relaxation on a basic level. It works on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels.

Shiatsu is different from other massages in that you work with the chi (life energy) rather than the muscular energy. There is no basic treatment, the practitioner makes an energetic diagnosis through looking, feeling and talking. Shiatsu is good for a whole host of medical and emotional problems including backpain, sciatica, depression, anxiety and worry.

Martin Julich and Laura Davidson, co-founders of the Aberdeen school of Shiatsu explains that: “Shiatsu has been around for at least four thousand years so there is a long history of it being used effectively for peoples health. It is both a preventative and a healing art, as it aims to restore and balance the human body and its energy systems. We don’t look at illness as a disease, we treat the whole person, mind, body and soul.”

Swedish Massage

An intensive and deep massage treatment, this massage works by gently mobilising tissues, improving circulation, and stimulating muscle tissue.

Anne Finney 322593

Maggie Brookes Carter, director of the Grampian School of Massage, and enthusiastic proponent of the body’s ability to heal itself in almost all disease situations says:

“Massage is essential to helping the body heal itself. Think of your soft tissues like a sponge. If they are squeezed tight (knotted) there is no way that Good oxygenated blood can get in, while waste products cannot get out. The more rubbish and the more tension, the harder it is to get toxins into the blood, and breath and sweat them out. Obviously, eventually, sickness will occur.”

Remedial massage

Similar to Swedish massage, remedial massage is based on deeper soft tissue manipulative techniques, and more complex treatments, for example, muscle energy techniques where a person is asked to push against a gentle resistance to restore balance.

Performance enhancement, anything from a shoulder strain to stress, depression, arthritis, any stress-related conditions, Repetitive strain

Sports massage

Using remedial techniques to help sports injuries, tennis elbow, golfers knee, twisting injuries shoulder strains, and can help with knees, Rolfing

Aromatherapy

Controlled use of essential oil normally specifically chosen for the person dependent on what the problem is works holistically, mind body spirit, good for lots of things, removing muscular aches and pains, breaks down toxins, balances hormonal system, helps emotional problems, helpw with cellulite, respiratory problems depression, menopausal symptoms, sciatic pain.

Indian Head Massage

Indian head massage works on the back shoulder, scalp and arms, benefits stimulates and improves your scalp circulation, it can strengthen hair growth, relax headaches and eye strain, imporves scalp circulation, eliminates muscle tension and stimulates circucation, improves sinus problems

Other information

There should be some type of pre-massage consultation in which the practitioner outlines contraindications of the treatment and asks about your personal medical history. This is necessary in order to assess which type of treatment is suitable. In some types of massage you strip to your underwear, but should be covered by a towel at all times.

In Aberdeen, a 40 minute to an hour massage can cost anywhere from £22 to £45. Your masseur/masseuse should have checkable qualifications and indemnity insurance. Ask around and get recommendations from friend and colleagues if you can. Otherwise check Yellow Pages under Massage therapists.

Useful numbers

The Rosemount Centre for Complementary Therapies. Mount Street, Aberdeen. Treatments include Shiatsu, Remedial Massage, Rolfing, Aromatherapy, Indian Head Massage and Reflexology. Tel 01224 636378

Broomhill Clinic. Bromhill Road, Aberdeen. Remedial Massage, Swedish Massage. 01224 472727.

Grampian School of Massage. Ellon Road, Bridge of Don. Swedish, Remedial, Aromatherapy, Reflexology

Irene Mccrae. Woodend Terrace, Hazlehead. Aromatherapy, Swedish and Indian Head Massage. 01224 324314.

Angela Wilken. North Silver Street, Aberdeen Swedish, Sports Massage, Reflexology, Indian Head Massage – 01224 622049

The Tranquility Centre. Rose Street Aberdeen. Sports, remedial and swedish massage 01224 868055.

The Therapy Rooms 582528