

Massage Mastery

Helping People Relax Through Massage Mastery

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The image features a woman with blonde hair and a surprised expression, holding several colorful shopping bags (pink, orange, red) in front of her. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts.

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The image shows a group of diverse young adults in a classroom setting, all giving a thumbs-up gesture. The background is a bright, modern classroom with large windows. The text and logos are overlaid on the image.

For The Love Of Massage

Massage Therapy produces a number of different benefits for the body and the person who inhabits it. These are not New Age babblings. Research provides support for several of the claims. Admittedly more scientific studies need to be undertaken to provide further data, but to date, university research and studies made by the National Institutes of Health provide some validity to support the following:

1. Patients after abdominal surgery have a quicker recovery time if they receive regular massage.
2. People suffering from hypertension show a decrease in their blood pressure after Massage Therapy sessions.
3. Sufferers of migraine headaches have a decrease in pain with a massage treatment system in place.

Who doesn't love a good massage? The power of touch is absolutely amazing. It can heal aches, cure ailments, and just make a person feel wonderful!

Many people will dole out big money to have a professional massage. And why wouldn't they? Getting a massage is an amazing walk into total relaxation and feeling good. Nothing can be more profound than the feeling you have after a great massage.

Another amazing benefit of massage is bringing you closer to a person you care about. There's no better way to establish true intimacy than through the power of touch!

But massage is about so much more than intimacy. It's about healing problems, making your muscles feel better when they ache, and achieving a sense of relaxation that just isn't possible through any other means.

I had my first massage when I was given one as a wedding present. I was completely unprepared for what would ensue during this session. I thought I would lay down on a table and have some hulking woman knead my skin until I hurt. Boy was I wrong!

My masseuse was a young girl fresh out of school and practicing in her first job. She stood about five foot two and had long, blond hair reminiscent of my own. I thought to myself, "How can she give me a good massage?"

I was pleasantly surprised 45 minutes later when I emerged from the massage room feeling more relaxed than I ever had in my entire lifetime. No, nothing inappropriate happened. What did occur was a complete and total healing, therapeutic experience that was way beyond my wildest dreams.

After this experience, I began to wonder whether or not it was possible to have that same experience at home. Sure, I would have to convince my husband, but it was worth a try. So I started researching the art of massage and how to give a great massage without any formal training.

What came out of that research is this book. I didn't know that there was so much information and so many techniques that could make a massage a gratifying experience for the receiver and the giver.

Massage can bring you and your partner to a new height of satisfaction. You don't have to pay big bucks for that professional massage. You can get the same results at home! All it takes is a little information and some experimentation.

I decided that I wanted to share what I learned. When you read this book, you'll learn all about massage and how you can bring this age-old practice into play yourself. Massage is a beautiful and wonderfully relaxing way to share something special with that special someone.

Learn how to give a great massage, and you'll be the newest hero in town! So read on and learn everything you need to know about giving a great massage!

Who Wants A Massage?

Of course, you know what massage is. It's when a hulking woman named Helga kneads your body causing immense pleasure and horrific pain. Not exactly!

Massage or massage therapy as it has come to be known in our time, began with the ancient Egyptians, then the Greeks and finally the Romans. Yes these ancient cultures used massage therapy for both healing and

pleasure. The science of massage therapy had also spread to other early cultures such as India, China and Japan. The last three went further by integrating it to form an integral part of their systems of medicine and healing.

Massage is the organized form of touch. It is performed by the hands, elbows and forearms gliding over the skin and applying pressure to the underlying muscles by a system of movements. These movements involve stroking, rubbing, pressing and kneading. Massage is not a cure for what ails you, but it can greatly aid in the normal functions of the body and restore balance as well.

Massage works by the body responding to the various touch techniques given to it. These touch techniques causes the body to engage in there normal functions. It acts like a natural stimulus for the body to respond with positive effects in many different ways.

Massage also works by reducing stress, managing the body's waste products, fostering normal bodily functions, providing a sense of well being and boosting mental health.

Why Massage

The gradual development of massage therapy into a full blown art and science can be determined as only logical. When we fall, bruise or sustain any sort of physical injury, we usually tend to touch it. Even if that act produces no form of healing solution, or does it?

Touch in itself is very comforting to us. It reassures us, make us feel loved and accepted. Whenever someone is in pain, we tend to want to hug, hold or touch that person in some way. When a child gets hurt, they want someone to kiss it and make it better. Somehow we start to feel that the very act of physical contact will contribute to the overall health of a person. Guess what? You are correct in that assumption.

Studies have shown that, touching among other comforting and intimate contact, does assist in the overall recovery and health of a person - whether that person is in need of physical, mental, emotional or spiritual healing or comfort.

Massage has played an important role in history for many, many years, and it's going to continue that way for many, many more!

Benefits Of Massage

We all know a massage feels good and can make us more relaxed, but there are also many, many health benefits that come with a massage.

Therapeutic effects include:

- Stimulating blood and lymph circulation
- Loosening muscular tension
- Toning and firming muscles

When fibers stop sliding over each other easily, it's most likely the cause of people not getting enough exercise, too much exercise, or physical or mental tension. These factors cause the drop of any increase in muscle tone

The waste products from muscular activity, like carbon dioxide, lactic acid and urea, build up in the muscles. Massage therapy fosters drainage of those wastes, therefore restoring their normal functions

- Stress reduction

The effect in reducing stress is seen as one of the most valuable aspects, since stress is blamed for causing up to 90% of human diseases

- Increased muscle flexibility and range of motion

For both of these, this results in increased power and performance, which helps you work efficiently and with proper intensity to facilitate the body's muscle-building response

- Shortens recovery time between workouts

Waste products such as lactic and carbonic acid build up in muscles after exercise. Increased circulation to these muscles help to eliminate toxic debris and shorten recovery time

- Prevent over-training.

Massage has a relaxing effect on the muscles, as well as a sedative effect on the nervous system. This can prevent over-training syndrome which has limiting effect on muscle building.

- Aids in fat loss

According to some research, massage may burst the fat capsule in subcutaneous tissue so that the fat exudes and becomes absorbed. In this way, combined with proper nutrition, massage may help in weight loss.

- Prevents and even heals injuries

By stretching connective tissue, massage improves circulation to help prevent or break down adhesions. Massage also influences the excretion of certain fluids (nitrogen, phosphorous, sulfur) necessary for tissue repair

Massage therapy also fosters the drainage of lymph, causing better circulation of the blood. Because of this, the skin looks much better than if drainage was difficult. Why bother with the how the skin looks? Often, the appearance of the skin is usually a good indicator of a person's inner condition. In reference to muscles, massage therapy has a good effect on the fibrous tissue surrounding the joints.

The effect of massage upon the autonomic nervous system gives birth to the feeling of relaxation. How? By stimulating the sensory nerve endings located within the skin. Signals are sent to the brain by the central nervous system. This in turn produces the experience of feeling good. Once again because of this action, a new reaction takes place by causing a significant reduction in the body's stress level.

When a person is relaxed, abdominal breathing becomes more natural. I can assure you, your abdominal organs appreciate this. It's quite clear that the nervous system plays a crucial role in massage therapy. It's also responsible for the vascular system, since it controls it. A decrease in efficient drainage and supply of blood, is caused by a reduction of vascular.

Massage therapy can improve blood and lymph circulation, loosen stiffened muscles and joints, and create a sense of well-being as the rhythmic movements induce relaxation in the patient. Its benefits extend from infants to seniors, and are equally as effective for the homemaker as for the professional athlete.

Massage improves circulation and general nutrition of muscles. This appears to be the most valuable fitness-related benefit. Massage is accompanied or followed by an increase interchange of substances between the blood and the tissue cells, which increases tissue metabolism.

After a muscle is exercised, vital nutrients must be supplied in order for it to increase in size. Massage maximizes the supply of nutrients and oxygen through increased blood flow, which helps the body rebuild itself.

While a massage won't build muscle directly, it helps to facilitate the body's rebuilding phase following a workout and influences muscular growth.

Getting a massage is just as important as regular workouts and supportive nutrition for a comprehensive fitness program. Great news for those of us who thought building a great body was all hard work!

Massage has also proven beneficial in treating conditions/disorders with psychological components, including sleep disorders, eating disorders, smoking, and depression. Successful relaxation of tensed and tired muscles can help achieve a state of emotional relaxation as well.

If you get a professional massage, a trained and licensed massage therapist will employ a number of techniques including effleurage, petrissage, friction and percussion, as they stroke, knead and touch their way to improving how your body reacts to the challenges it is facing. Oils and lotions are used to reduce actual surface friction on the skin, and to enhance the aromatherapy benefits.

You will only be required to undress to your level of comfort, and your body will be draped at all times, except for the area being worked on. The privacy and security provided by these measures, can add to the benefits of your massage, allowing increased relaxation.

After a massage, most people feel a state of calm and well-being that should not be cancelled out by rushing off to work. Enjoy this period of physical and emotional rest, and then reap the benefits of increased energy and productivity which can follow a massage session, and last for several days.

While the benefits of massage are many, it may not be safe if you have any of the following conditions: pregnancy, swelling of one specific area, a full stomach, infectious skin disorder, unhealed wounds, some cardiac conditions, phlebitis, varicose veins, or certain forms of cancer.

But the focus of this book is giving great massages yourself, so let's look at ways to begin giving massages.

Massage Prep

Even if you're giving a regular massage – not a sensual one, you must begin by preparing the area where the massage will be given. Take the phone off the hook and lock the doors. Play some soothing music or nature sounds – water sounds are especially great.

For parents, you might want to make sure that you're not going to be interrupted by kids, neighbors, or family. The key to a good massage is achieving relaxation and you can't fully relax until all distractions are taken out of your mind completely.

Turn out the lights and light a few candles so the walls flicker with a soft glow. Get a couple of sheets for him or her to cover with and to cover the work area, and you'll be ready to start!

If you are preparing to give a sensual massage – one that contains sexual contact – you'll want to be sure the area where you are giving the massage will convey the message that you want him or her to receive.

While we love nature sounds for regular massages, soft, romantic music is better for sensual massage. There are some great songs out there that can "stimulate" action where this is concerned, so look for music that fits your intentions.

Now that you have a place to give a massage and it's all set up the way you want it to be, let's look at some methods you can use to give the massage.

The Techniques

You've probably heard of all types of massage techniques - Shiatsu, Swedish, Rolfing, etc., are all different types of massage with different goals. Don't worry about all of this. You don't need to focus on the type of massage - only the goal. Your goal should be to soothe and relax the person on the receiving end!

As far as techniques go, there are a few methods you should practice so you can give a great massage!

Use A Lubricant

First, you're going to need some type of lubricant so your hands slide easily on the body. You should never try anything but the most minor of massages without lubricating the skin.

For example, if you want to rub her shoulders that's one thing. If you're going to give a skin-to-skin massage, always use a lubricant. Lubes help to both prepare the skin and to protect it.

Don't use Vaseline or Wesson oil to massage her - you want the lubricant to be absorbed by the skin. You should also stay away from lubes that are absorbed too quickly like hand lotions. What you really want to use is massage oil.

We have a separate section dedicated to massage oils and have even given you some recipes so you can make your own!

Massage Muscle, Not Skin or Bone

Try this: rub your fingers gently over the skin of your arm. Now, press harder and move the skin without dragging your fingers across it. This is the difference between caressing and a massage. Remember that massages are for muscles below the skin - not for the skin itself.

You want a deep, penetrating effect - not something superficial. This is because the nerves in the skin tire very quickly. Further, many people are ticklish - not just on their feet, but all over their bodies! You want a massage to be relaxing and focused - not an irritant!

As well, you want to stay away from bones. By pressing hard on the skin just over a bone, you're going to cause pain - not pleasure. Unless you know your human anatomy you're probably not going to know where the bones exactly are; so, before you begin rubbing an area, make sure that the

tissue below the skin is soft. In fact, use the relatively softness test to determine how hard to press.

For example, press your fingers into your relaxed stomach. This softness tells you that there are no bones below your fingers - only organs. You don't want to press into an area like this very hard. On the other hand, when you press your fingers into your thigh, you can feel how firm the tissue feels here. This is because of the underlying bone.

When you're massaging a person's back, shoulders, legs or arms, look for this firmness as a good place to work.

Work Large Muscle Groups

There are only a few of them in the body - mostly in the neck, back, shoulders and legs. By concentrating on the large muscle groups, not only is your massage more efficient - you are getting the largest source of body tension - but you're also preventing damage.

On either side of the spine are large muscle groups (called "Latissimus Dorsi"). These are the long, strong muscles that keep you standing up - and are great places to work. Again, you have to be careful here, because just underneath these muscles are the ribs - and you know how ticklish some people are here!

Use Firm, Even Pressure

Pressure that is too light or inconsistent (light, heavy and light again), can be as uncomfortable as too much pressure. Be sure to use an even amount - not too hard, and not too light when giving a massage. In fact, it is better to start out somewhat lightly and ask if he or she wants more. Gently increase your strength until he or she indicates that it is enough.

Stay Away From Certain Areas

If you try to massage areas that are overly hard or overly soft, you're wasting your time and could cause discomfort during what is supposed to be a relaxing time.

Often people will have hard knots in their back area that they want loosened, so if the recipient asks you to massage these areas, go ahead.

Know When To Stop

A massage that lasts for hours is probably going to cause the massagee to fall asleep, which is generally alright, but if he or she doesn't,

having their body rubbed and manipulated for hours on end can get annoying. That can undo everything you did in the first 30 minutes.

There really is no perfect time to indicate when it's time to quit. We'll go over technique in the next section, but if you've spent about 5-10 minutes on each area of the body, you'll probably be just fine with the length of your massage.

Now that you know the basics, let's move on to putting the techniques to use.

The Gift Of Massage

Giving a massage is more than just manipulating tissue. A truly effective massage is a science with the desired end results depending on proper use of specific techniques. You don't have to be a professional, though you do have to know a little about what you're doing.

First, the person you are massaging should be undressed. Let him or her cover up with a sheet to ward off any chills while you are working. They should be lying on their stomach.

As far as where to give a massage, a couch or soft bed isn't the best place. The body must be supported in order for you to administer the full benefits of your massage. A massage table is good to have for this, but other than that, try the floor if you don't have an orthopedic mattress.

Find a comfortable position to work in, particularly if the person is lying on the floor. If you end up with cramps, they'll need to massage you!

If you're massaging a woman, make sure her hair is out of your work area. You don't want to get massage oil in it, but if you do, don't worry, it won't hurt anything.

Pick up the lubricant or oil you have selected and squeeze some onto your palm. Don't drip it directly on her skin - it may be cold. You can rub your hands together to warm both the oil and your skin. Even on a hot evening, try to make sure your hands are warmer than the air. This difference helps remind her to relax.

Start with the back, neck, and arms. Place your hands flat, to either side of the spine and glide them up towards the shoulders, then curve outwards and bring them down over the rib cage on each side, and repeat, increasing the pressure, slightly. You can then extend the range of your

motion to gliding down the arms. Use long, smooth strokes to create relaxation, and prepare the muscles for deeper kneading.

Warm up the back by applying thumb pressure along both sides of the spine simultaneously: Start at the lower back and knead gently with your thumbs up to the neck area. This will also promote relaxation.

Use a smooth, delicate stroke (called "effleurage") to apply massage oil. In one long stroke, slide your palms down either side of the spine to the pelvis; scoop out around the hips and back up the sides to the shoulders. Maintain contact with the back. Glide your hands over the back to start a new area.

Continue up both sides of the neck to the base of the head. Start at the spine and slide your palms in opposite directions outward to the sides of the back, starting with the lower back area and moving up to the shoulders.

Knead the fleshy muscular areas at the top of the shoulders, the mid-back area and the buttocks to loosen tight muscles and fascia (the connective tissue). Use your thumbs or fingers to apply pressure to areas that feel hard or tight, often called knots.

Perform clockwise circular friction with your fingertips along the muscles that are close to the spine and around the shoulder blades. Rotate the arms gently, one at a time, to loosen the shoulder joints and enhance blood flow

Incorporate effleurage throughout your massage as a connective stroke to move from one area to another, to soothe an area of localized deep tissue work or to make a transition to another stroke. Use slow movements for a soothing or calming response and fast movements for a stimulating effect. Do not put any direct pressure on the spine. Avoid any broken skin, blisters or areas of possible infection.

Once the muscles are relaxed, you can use the heels of your hands to make small, counter clockwise circles, to give a deeper massage, while you move them up the back, over the shoulders, and down the sides.

Deep muscle massage for the untrained, should be limited to a kneading of major muscle groups in the shoulders, arms and thighs. "Gather" the muscle up into your hands, exerting gentle pressure, as you roll it between your palms or fingers. Repeat, and alternate with a circular massage using the heels of your hands.

It's a good idea to start at one point on the body – say the upper right side and concentrate there until you feel you've done your job and then

move on in a clockwise motion until you've gotten back to the place you started in.

For example, we divide the body into four quadrants: Upper right, lower right, lower left, upper left. Go in this order:

- Upper right – from the spine out to the side, the shoulder blades and right arm to lower back
- Lower right – the right leg, buttock, and foot
- Lower left – the left leg, buttock, and foot
- Upper left – from the spine out to the side, the shoulder blades and left arm to lower back
- Head – massage the scalp and temples

Do all of this on the person's back and then turn them over and do it on the front.

Wind up the massage with an all over gentle rubbing from head to toe. It reinvigorates the muscles and lets her know that the massage is coming to an end.

There, of course, are other areas of the body that can benefit greatly from massage – and feel just as great!

The Foot Massage

A good foot massage can be better than sex - but only if it's done right. "Reflexology" is the ultimate study of foot massage, but you don't need to be a trained therapist to benefit from the kneading and stroking that can bring relief to tired, aching feet.

In addition, it's something you can do for yourself, although having a partner or therapist give you a foot massage, allows you to relax totally, as your feet are being worked on.

The first step is to have clean feet. Either wash the feet, or soak for a while in a solution of Epsom salts and warm water. This can be a lovely, quiet time for you to let go of the overall stress in your body as well. Feet should be dried thoroughly before you start working on them.

Massage oils and creams are the ideal substance to use on your hands, as they are specially designed to last longer, and provide a smoother glide to your hands and less friction on the skin. Something with

a mint or eucalyptus scent is very refreshing to tired feet. However, if all you have is hand cream or baby oil, those will work in a pinch.

When doing your own feet, sit in a position that you will find comfortable over the period of massaging. This may be cross-legged on the floor, or even in a chair, as you watch television.

Rest the foot to be worked on, over the other knee or on your chair, so that you can access it easily without stretching. If you are working on someone else's foot, make sure their leg is well-supported, so that they are able to relax and let the muscles be moved and kneaded. Recliner chairs are ideal for this.

Begin with gentle, circular motions, massaging the oil into the top and bottom of the foot. This conditions the skin, and helps to get the foot accustomed to being handled, without being tickled.

Next, place your thumbs on the tops of the foot, and make long strokes from the ankle to toes, placing gentle pressure as you go, between the tendons and ligaments.

Then move to the soles of your feet, and work them with circular motions of your thumbs, starting in the arch, and working outwards to the toes and back down to the heel.

Massage your toes as well, using the same circular motions, and gently stretching them out as you stroke. Finish off by giving your whole foot an overall massage, working in the opposite direction, from toes to ankle.

Babies can benefit from massage too!

Babies Love Massage Too

Babies who are suddenly released from the womb, enter a world that is totally unfamiliar, except for the sound of their parents' voices, primarily the mother's. Infant massage is a way to re-establish that closeness the baby experienced before birth, and also offers the father a chance to establish a physical bond as well as an emotional one.

Gentle massage of an infant's entire body, releases endorphins and oxytocin, natural substances that can help alleviate the discomfort of teething, diaper rash, and stress from being over-tired.

Facial massage can help loosen sinus congestion, and the tapotement technique of Swedish massage, can loosen chest congestion. Regular

massage of an infant's abdomen can help prevent colic, and improve the digestive process. All of the above are a physical benefit to babies, but equally important, is the emotional aspect.

The simple effects of touch have been known to have a vital impact on infants. Studies dating back to the late 1800s, show that orphaned or abandoned infants in institutions who received less tactile stimulation than infants in a normal family unit, did poorer, and suffered more from illnesses.

A century later, in 1986, the Touch Therapy Institute published a study of massage therapy in premature infants, which showed that pre-term babies receiving massage, experienced 47% more weight gains, and spent an average of six days less in hospital.

The emotional stimulation that is provided by massage, is balanced out by its calming effects, while the physical stimulations including improved blood circulation, go on to help build on their neurological development.

The touch of a parent often conveys more than just a physical sensation to the infant. In the contact, as well as any vocal communication, they are able to sense your emotions. This can serve as reassurance, and an inducement to relax.

Infant massage has been found to be particularly good for babies who have difficulty falling asleep, or sleeping more than a short period at a time.

Choose a moment in which you and your child are relaxed and calm. A half hour after the baby has eaten is recommended.

Be sure that the room temperature is warm (78 degrees Fahrenheit). Undress the baby completely, if the weather is cold or humid cover the areas of the baby's body that are not being massaged.

Put the baby on a soft surface so your baby will feel comfortable and secure. Keep some little pillows handy.

It is a good idea to put some cream on your hands and rub them together so they will be soft and warm.

Basically the massage flows from the head to the toes. With soft and

gentle touches you will work on the head, face, shoulders, arms, chest, stomach and legs.

While you massage your baby look tenderly at him/her. Doing this you stimulate all the senses of the baby and establish a more intense visual and tactile communication. Feel free to speak to your baby, do not inhibit yourself.

Remember that your touches should be tender do not make mechanic motions. Try to be flexible by not keeping a rigid routine.

If the baby wants to change position let them do so. Do not force your baby to keep a position; you can go back to these areas later on.

Are you wondering how strong a pressure you should use? Close your eyes and press your eyelids. The pressure you should use is the same as pressing your eyelids without any discomfort.

In the small areas use your fingertips. In bigger areas use the palm of your hand. "Little strokes" mean to touch your baby's skin gently and "massage" is to softly move the muscles under the skin.

Here are the steps to follow for a great baby massage:

1. Head. Touch the forehead, temples and the base of the cranium, eyebrows and eyelids, nose, cheeks, the area around the mouth, and the ears and surrounding area
2. Jaws – At the frontal part of the neck, gently make small strokes and massage the posterior part of the neck with slow movements down to the shoulders. Softly put both hands on his/her shoulders. Caress the baby from the neck to the shoulders in the direction of his chest.
3. Shoulders and Arms - Form a ring with your fingers and thumb around your child's arm. Begin to caress around the armpit and then go down along the arm. Be very careful when you arrive at the elbow, it is a very sensitive region. In the wrist you can gently practice turning motions using. Remember to take great care with all these motions.

4. Stomach - Massage the stomach in a circular way (the genitalia area is excluded from the massage). Caress the abdomen moving your hands clockwise beginning below the ribs.
5. Legs - Caress each leg with your whole hand, press gently on the thighs. Slightly flex the legs and knees pressing the thighs gently against the body.
6. Heels and Feet - A foot massage is very relaxing. Begin by putting a soft pressure on each toe, then the foot and return to the toes again. Sometimes a foot massage can help reduce stomach pain. Caress gently all the toes. Apply circular movements at the heels.
7. Back - Turn your baby around. Begin with large and slow movements that include head, neck, back and legs always in one direction. Give your baby soft strokes on the shoulders and back and massaging with your fingertips with circular movements. Do not massage the spinal cord, only put your hands over it and let the baby feel the warm sensation. You can even make small circular movements on your baby's back. Put your hands at the top of the legs and begin gently caressing while working your way down towards the foot.
8. When you arrive to the feet start again from the top. With soft and slow movements finish the massage starting once again at the head and back to the toes.

Repeat these exercises when you want to have a few special moments with your baby. Do them when you have adequate time for you and your child. Do not feel impatient if the baby does not cooperate...simply try again later.

Pregnant mothers can also get great benefits from a good massage. The technique for them is a little different, though.

Pregnancy Massage

When you carry a baby for nine months, pregnancy massage can alleviate many of the physical discomforts, while preparing you for the birth experience.

Stress is one of the earliest problems that a pregnant woman may have to deal with, and massage can go a long way towards helping her to relax, and become comfortable with the changes in her body and her life.

As the pregnancy progresses, a woman can experience discomfort in the neck, back, or lower legs from postural and weight-related issues. Joints that bear the most weight can become sore, and muscles that are not used to being stretched can begin cramping.

Massage allows the woman to be touched in a nurturing way, that is designed first to relax her physically, and then to benefit her emotionally as she enjoys increased blood circulation, skin conditioning oils, and the increased energy that can be derived from therapeutic massage.

It is also beneficial for reducing edema, maintaining skin elasticity, aiding digestive problems, and teaching the expectant mother how to assist the birthing process by relaxing the muscles of the legs, back and abdomen.

However, pregnancy massage is not for every woman. It is generally not recommended for those with a history of premature delivery, placental misplacement, toxemia, or pregnancy diabetes.

Other conditions that may prevent a pregnant mother from participating in massage therapy include: heart disease, cancers, high blood pressure, thrombophlebitis, skin irritation, and infectious diseases. Although with medical consultation, it may be possible to treat the condition, in order to permit the woman to enjoy the benefits that massage can bring to her pregnancy and other health issues.

Giving a pregnant woman a massage uses basically the same techniques as a regular massage, but with some adaptations.

During the early weeks of pregnancy, a mother can usually lie on her stomach and receive a pregnancy massage the same as she might any other time. As her stomach becomes rounder and firmer, lying on her side will be more comfortable and is recommended after the twenty-second week of pregnancy when lying flat on the back reduces circulation for her and the baby.

Since many women are especially sensitive to odors, use an unscented lotion and make sure your fingernails are short and trimmed smooth. Avoid wearing rings, watches, or any other jewelry that may distract from the experience, and make sure to administer the massage in a quiet area, away from the distractions of children, pets, and telephones.

The goal is to help mom relax in a nurturing environment. Soothing, soft music may also help set the mood. A pregnancy massage may last from 10 minutes to an hour; depending on how much discomfort the mother is feeling.

When administering a prenatal massage, use a firm touch but avoid massaging so deeply that the mother experiences pain. For this reason, good communication is necessary between you and the mother. Follow her lead in where and how deeply you massage, and avoid massaging the area between the ankle and heel. Many professionals believe this area is related to the uterus, and massaging this part of the body may lead to early delivery.

Proceed through the steps we outlined above for a regular massage. If the mother is lying on her back, this will require her to “flip” over when you want to work on the opposite side.

Professional massage therapists often recommend a weekly massage for the first and second trimester and more often during the last trimester, when mothers often experience increased back pain, leg cramps, and round ligament pains.

It’s very important to use a lubricant when giving a massage. Oils made specifically for massages are the best to use.

Getting Oiled Up

Massage oils serve a number of purposes, the chief of which is to increase the gliding ability of the massager’s hands, and to reduce friction on the skin. They can also help to condition the skin as you work at reducing muscle tension and improving blood circulation. Scented oils can also be incorporated as aromatherapy, helping to induce a state of relaxation in the client/patient.

When choosing massage oil, think of the scent that the person who will be receiving the massage likes the most. If you’re not sure, it’s usually a good bet to go with oil that has a vanilla scent since vanilla tends to be relaxing to most people.

Most massage oils are a blend of a carrier oil, a base with beneficial properties of their own, and essential oils that add to the fragrance, or have some other benefit to the skin.

Some of the preferred massage oils are:

- **Hazelnut oil:** Has no taste or smell to overpower other fragrances. It penetrates deeply, and has great moisturizing capacity.
- **Wheat germ oil:** A sticky substance on its own, dilution with other oils makes it excellent for stimulating skin cell growth, and improving circulation.
- **Almond oil:** One of the favorite choices as an emollient, it helps the skin balance its loss/gain of moisture, is non-greasy, and easy to spread.
- **Avocado oil:** An excellent carrier oil for those with mature skin, or conditions that require special care. Re-hydrates and nourishes sun dried skin, and is easily absorbed.
- **Jojoba oil:** Ideal for all skin types, it penetrates easily, and is not as sweet smelling as the nut-based blends.
- **Grape seed oil:** Valued for the linoleic acid content, a fatty acid with significant benefits for skin and cell membranes.

Just because you use an oil as opposed to a cream, don't think that the recipient will come out of the massage with greasy skin. Commercial massage oils have excellent absorption, hydration, and healing properties.

They simply serve as a medium to allow the therapist an even, gliding motion as they begin to knead and stroke. The regularity of motion induces physical and mental relaxation, which is enhanced by the pleasing aromas.

You can find massage oils in many places. There are a number of online venues where you can choose from a huge variety at some pretty great prices. However, you may want to simply make your own massage oil.

Massage Oil

If you enjoy giving and receiving a massage, you might also enjoy creating your own massage oils, according to the benefits that each brings and the aromatherapy of certain scents.

Remember that a little massage oil goes a very long way. It is used to lubricate the hands of the massager, so that they glide easily over the skin, while your hands are kneading and rolling muscles and tissue. That means that a batch of massage oil can be quite small, as little as six or eight tablespoons.

To start, you'll need a "carrier" oil. That is the basic ingredient that provides most of the liquid in massage oil. These are usually vegetable based, and have different properties that may impact your choice. You can usually find these at the grocery store.

For example, avocado oil is very beneficial to aging skin, or skin that is repeatedly exposed to the weather. Hazelnut oil will penetrate deeply, and it has no aroma that will overpower the scent of essential oils that you add for fragrance.

When you have a recipe, it's time to select essential oils to go with your carrier oil. Essential oils are highly concentrated, and are used at a blend of two or three drops to a batch of oil. They are also prone to breaking down under temperature or light extremes, and should be stored in colored glass bottles, in a cool, dry location.

Handle your essential oils carefully, and do not apply them directly to skin. Some concentrated oils can be irritants, and even toxic. Others will cause skin sensitivity and irritation when exposed to the sun if there is a high concentration of that essential in your massage oil, and you go outdoors immediately.

Glass bottles are also useful for your oil blends. You can choose colors, or create custom labels for your personalized massage oils, according to whether they come from the woody, fruity, spicy, citrus or "green" blends.

We've found some great recipes for you to possibly try out.

Making Your Own Massage Oil

For the do-it-yourselfer, making massage oil is a fun way to make the massage completely your own! Here are a few recipes you can try if you're feeling creative!

For each, mix ingredients in a clean, dark glass bottle, shaking the blend before using.

Stimulating Oil

- 4 ounces of your preferred carrier oil
- 15 drops of rose oil
- 15 drops of ylang ylang oil
- 10 drops of jasmine oil

Flowery Escape

- 4 ounces of your preferred carrier oil
- 15 drops of rosewood oil
- 10 drops of geranium oil
- 8 drops of jasmine oil
- 4 drops of neroli oil

Spicy Massage Oil

- 4 ounces of your preferred carrier oil
- 15 drops of sandalwood oil
- 9 drops of cinnamon oil
- 6 drops of peppermint oil
- 5 drops of black pepper oil

While you can find carrier oils usually in a grocery store, you'll have to find the scented oils either online or in a specialty store. Look for a craft shop or craft supply store.

Don't forget to test your oil mixture before applying too liberally to your partner's skin - apply to a small area and wait a few minutes, watching for any kind of reaction.

Believe it or not, you can even give yourself a massage if you feel stressed out.

Practical Self Massage

You can easily manage to massage yourself. This can be especially beneficial to energize yourself before school or work in the morning, or to unwind in the evening.

You can massage your feet while watching TV, or massage your hands while talking on the phone. You do not need to undress, but you must be comfortable. Use oil if you are massaging on bare skin. Sit in a chair or on the floor, or lie down with your knees bent and your feet on the floor.

Here's how to do each part of your body:

Shoulders

Most people suffer from occasional stiff necks, aching shoulders and headaches, so the shoulders are the perfect place to begin self-massage.

1. Stroke your right shoulder with your left hand. Mold your hand to the curves of your body. Starting at the base of your skull, stroke down the side of your neck, over your shoulder and down your arm to the elbow. Glide back to your neck and repeat at least three times. Then do the other side.
2. Make circular pressures with your fingertips on either side of the spine. Work up the neck and around the base of the skull. Then knead each shoulder; squeeze and release the flesh on your shoulders and at the top of your arms.
3. Loosely clench your left hand into a fist and gently pound your right shoulder. Keep your wrist flexible. This springy movement improves the circulation and can be very invigorating if you are tired. Repeat on the other side.
4. Finish by stroking softly and smoothly both hands. Start with your hands on the side of your face and glide them gently down under your chin. Slide your hands past each other at the front of the neck, so that each hand is on the opposite shoulder. Stroke gently over your shoulders, down your arms and off at the fingertips. Repeat as often as you like. This hypnotic stroke is so relaxing and can relieve headaches and tension.

Legs

Knowing how to massage your own legs is very useful whether you are athletic or not. Leg massage can relieve aching after standing too long & help tired muscles recover after exercise. It stimulates the lymph system and regular thigh massage is believed by many to improve the appearance of thighs by smoothing them out & preventing cellulite. Do the whole sequence on one leg first, then the other one.

1. First, mold your hands to the shape of your leg, rest your foot flat and bend your knee up. Start by stroking your whole leg from ankle to thigh with one hand on each side of the leg. Begin at the foot and stroke smoothly up the calf, over the knee and up to the top of the thigh. Repeat five times.
2. Knead the whole thigh, paying attention to the front and outside. With alternate hands, rhythmically squeeze and release the flesh. This regular kneading can really improve the shape & texture of the thighs.
3. After that step, smooth your thigh by stroking it. Stroke up the thigh from the knee with one hand following the other.
4. Pummel the front and outside of your thighs with loosely clenched fists. This bouncy movement brings blood to the surface and relieves stiffness after sitting down for too long.
5. Massage all around your knee, stroke the area gently, then apply circular pressures with your fingertips around the kneecap. Finish by stroking softly behind your knee up toward your body.
6. Knead your calf muscles with both hands alternating squeezing the muscle away from the bone & then releasing it. Then gently soothe the area by gently stroking, one hand following the other up the back of the leg.

Feet

It's easy to massage your own feet. If you are sitting up, rest one foot on the opposite leg. Bad posture, back ache and fatigue can all stem from unnoticed foot problem. By massaging your feet daily you can refresh your whole body.

1. Put one hand on top of the foot and the other under the sole, then stroke smoothly from your toes to your ankles. Glide your hands back to your toes and repeat.
2. Support your foot with one hand and work on each toe individually. Squeeze it firmly, and gently stretch each toe with a gentle pull.
3. With one thumb on top of the other, do a line of firm pressures down the center of the sole and lines on either side. Then, with one thumb, do circular pressures on the arch and the ball of the foot.
4. Support your foot with one hand and make the other into a loose fist. Do knuckling movements all over the sole by rippling your fingers around in small circular movements.
5. Then, still holding the foot with one hand, hack the sole with your other hand, Flick your hand away the moment you touch the foot, so that the effect is light and springy.
6. Stroke around the ankle with your fingertips, as you stroke up toward the leg and gently as you glide back. Finish by stroking the foot as you did at the beginning.

Hands

It may seem surprising that people carry a lot of tension around in their hands. But it's actually quite obvious when you think about how much you use your hands. Most of our movements are holding, clutching actions, so it is very relaxing to counteract these movements by opening the palm and your fingers. I am sure you can think of all the abuse your hands take in a day.

1. Stroke the back of your hand, pushing firmly up toward the wrist and gliding back gently. Then squeeze the hand all over, pressing it between your palm and your fingers.
2. Squeeze each finger all over and make circular pressures over the joints with your thumb. Then hold the finger at its base and pull it gently to stretch it, sliding your grip up the finger and off the tip.

3. Stroke between the tendons on the back of the hand with your thumb. Stroke in the furrow to the wrists doing four strokes in each furrow.
4. Turn your hand over and support the back with your fingers. Do firm circular and static pressures with your thumb, working all over the palm and around the wrist.
5. Finish the massage by stroking the palm of your hand from the fingers to the wrist. Push into it with the heel of your other hand, then glide gently back and repeat. If you end your massage with your hands, this is a good time to apply a hand lotion to them.

Arms

Though you may feel tempted to ignore your arms, you will find that a thorough massage can help to release tension elsewhere in the body, especially in the shoulders

1. Smooth your whole arm by stroking from the wrist to the shoulder. Stroke firmly as you move up the arm and then glide back and repeat.
2. Knead all the way up your arm, squeezing and releasing the flesh. Pay particular attention to the fleshy part at the back of the upper arm.
3. Do circular pressures on your forearm with your thumb. Then, with your thumb and fingers, circle in all the hollows around the elbow.
4. Pat your upper arm to stimulate the circulation and help prevent the unhealthy look some arms have. Finally, stroke your whole arm again. You can have great looking arms!

Abdomen

It is natural to rub your stomach when it aches, and any form of massage, however basic, is extremely comforting. It is also good for menstrual cramps. Lie down to massage your abdomen with your knees bent up.

1. Stroke clockwise around your abdomen with one hand following the other in a circle, using the whole surface of your hands.
2. Knead all over your abdomen with your fingers and thumbs. Then roll onto your side to knead your hips and bottom. Turn onto your back

and stroke around your abdomen again.

3. Pummeling hips: To wake yourself up after a massage, pummel your hips and bottom vigorously. Stand up and with loosely clenched fists, pummel the area very quickly. Not only does this leave you feeling refreshed and energized, it also improves the circulation, muscle tone and skin texture. Keep your wrists very flexible. Flick your hands away as soon as you strike the skin.

Face And Neck

Giving yourself a face massage can relieve headaches, anxiety and banish fatigue. Face massage can also benefit your appearance by improving your complexion and leaving your face looking fresher.

Use a fine face oil so you don't drag your skin. If you have oily skin wash your face after the massage. You can fit a massage in at any time: a stimulating one first thing in the morning, or a soothing one in the evening. Try to vary the movements: brisk and fast for an energizing effect or slow and smooth if you want a calming effect. Repeat each movement as often as you like.

1. Start by putting your hands over your face, with your fingers on your forehead and the heels of your hands on your chin. Hold them there for a moment, then very slowly and gently draw them out toward your ears. As they move out, imagine that they are dissolving the tension from your face and drawing it away like magnets.
2. Tilt your head to one side and using the back of your hands stroke from the collarbone to the chin, one hand following the other. Tilt your head to the left and stroke up the right side of your neck, then repeat on the other side. Stroke firmly to stimulate the circulation and help keep the skin on your neck firm. |
3. Pinch all along your jaw line using your thumbs and the knuckles of your index fingers. Start under your chin and work out toward your ears. Keep the pinching close to the bone, so you don't stretch the skin.
|
4. Gently, slap under your chin with the back of your hands, while alternating hands. Exercise the muscles under your chin by keeping

your tongue curled back in your mouth while you perform this stimulating movement.

5. Make small circular pressures all over your chin and around your mouth with the index and middle fingers of each hand. While you do this, exercise the muscle around your mouth by making a large O and holding your lips tightly over your teeth.

Then exercise the muscle further by exaggeratedly saying "Aah", "Ooh", "Eee", "Uuu", to stimulate the circulation and to prevent wrinkles from developing around your mouth -- it is never too young to start.]

6. Stroke from the corners of your mouth to your ears. Use one hand on each cheek and move them both out together. Then, both hands on one side, stroke from your mouth to your ear, using the back of your fingers.
7. Stroke up your forehead from the bridge of your nose to your hairline with one hand following the other. Mold your hands to the shape of your forehead, and close your eyes to enjoy this soothing movement.
8. Massage the muscles between your eyebrows to counteract from lines. Place both index fingers on the bridge of your nose and make short, firm strokes upward first, then across and then diagonally.
9. Make circular pressures all over your forehead, working in lines from the bridge of your nose to your temples, to cover the whole forehead up to your hairline. Press firmly, but don't drag your skin. Then stroke your forehead gently with your fingertips to soothe it after the last stimulating movement.
10. Stroke from the center of your forehead to your temples and finish by pressing gently on the temples. You can strengthen the jaw muscle by clenching your teeth slightly as you press on your temples. Feel the muscle working under your fingers. Then hardly moving the skin, circle slowly and steadily to stimulate the muscle.

11. Stroke in a circle around your eyes with your middle fingers. Stroke firmly and evenly from the bridge of your nose out over your eyebrows, press on your temples, then glide lightly under your eyes, barely touching the skin.
12. Pinch along around your eyebrows from the center to the temples with your thumbs and index fingers. Then press into the tiny indentation in the bone under the eyebrows at the bridge of the nose.
13. Relax your eyes by palming. Put the heel of your hands into your eye sockets and hold your hands there for a few seconds. Enjoy the darkness for a second. Press gently, and then slowly glide your hands away.

Many actors say that when they are totally exhausted, but still have to go on stage for the final act, they palm their eyes like this. Eye doctors say this is safe. After only a few seconds of darkness, there is a wonderful light that seems to revitalize many people. Try this, it only takes a few seconds, but it is very refreshing.

14. Finish by covering your face with your hands and stroking gently out to the sides.

This simple massage should make your skin look fresher and you will feel revitalized.

Massage can be a great way to spice up your sex life and seduce that person you've been dreaming of.

Sensual Massage

Sensual massage is another way of saying that a massage will come with some type of sexual contact. You will not, I repeat, will not get anything like this at a spa – so don't ask. Masseurs at spas are licensed at therapeutic massage.

At home, you can incorporate massage techniques into your lovemaking. The main purpose of massage is to relax the body, whereas sex excites it. It's best if you approach massage as an end in itself, not merely as a prelude to lovemaking.

Before you try to perform a sensual massage, take extra care that your partner knows what you are doing before you do it. Don't let a massage get out of hand. Keep your partner informed and tell them why you want to do this for them.

There are a number of considerations before you begin the experience of giving, and receiving a sensual massage.

As we said, you need to advise, and invite your partner! Give him or her plenty of advance notice, to ensure that you have each other's complete focus, and attention.

The next thing you'll need to determine is where the best place to share the massage experience will be. Often, practiced couples will use a bed, a padded tabletop, or a pillow covered floor as the location of choice.

You'll also need to plan ahead for those little extras you may want available to make the experience specific to your relationship - oils enjoyed by each of you, candles used during earlier romantic encounters - the list is endless, and personal to each of your adventures.

Some towels and/or covering cloths are also suggested, for cleanup of excess oils, or for ensuring the recipients warmth and comfort during the massage itself.

Sensual massage is contains a lot of the same components of regular massage, but there are some considerations you should think about.

Creating Ambiance

Preparing your space carefully can help ensure a peaceful and romantic evening or afternoon, one that is certain not to be forgotten for some time to come...

- unplug your telephone, lock the door, make alternative arrangements for children and pets
- turn the lights down low, or light a few candles instead - create your own 'cabin in the woods'
- ensure the room temperature is comfortable for a 'clothing optional' situation - we would recommend a setting of close to 80 degrees
- prepare a musical selection that is tranquil, and that consists of favorites for all participants - set the CD player to play all songs, so as

to produce no poorly timed interruptions

- assemble an array of your favorite oils, either premixed, or custom made to your wishes - *see our assortment of recipes specifically for lovers below*

The Massage Itself

The sensual massage has been called 'the dance of love'. It is a gift of intimacy, which by definition incorporates caring, and communication. Likewise, the giving of a truly sensual massage requires that one listens carefully to the needs, and wishes of their partner.

Start by ensuring that your partner is comfortable, warm, and relaxed. Begin the massage by applying warmed oils, mixed with a mutually enjoyed carrier, to the area of the body you want to work first.

Many begin with the back rub, an excellent area through which to achieve a heightened level of relaxation, and a more open line of communication.

Keep your strokes light at the start, listening attentively to the reactions of your partner. Their communications will be both spoken, and intimated through body language. The lighter the stroke the better, unless indications are that additional pressure would be preferred.

Continuous movement is important to the flow of the massage - when working on the back, begin at the neck, taking your fingers gently down the spine, and off to the side in a smooth, fluid motion. Let one stroke lead into another avoiding sudden movements and always focusing on the needs, and responses of your partner.

Keep your massage varied, using different strokes, and shifting to changing areas of the body. Balance opposing limbs, working one, then the other.

Some couples enjoy using 'props' to take the sensory nature of the experience beyond what simple fingers to skin can bring. Consider incorporating feathers, silk, or fresh flowers into your event - but don't rub too lightly, or you may send your partner into a tickle induced fit of laughter - enjoyable in most cases, but perhaps not as sensual a moment as one may be hoping for!

Always pay close attention to the state of relaxation your partner is in. Sleep is a possibility with any massage, but a true sensual massage walks this line carefully, ensuring a partner who is aware, capable of

communicating their needs & enjoyment, and of sharing in further intimacies that tend to flow naturally from such moments!

Engaging your partner in a moment dedicated solely to one another is one small way of ensuring a relationship that is positive, communicative, and intimate in more ways than one. It is one of many gifts worthy of giving, one that will ensure a loving & Happy Valentines Day or any occasion for that matter!

Of course, there are many devices on the market that can help with your massaging needs. Do they work?

Handheld Massagers

Let's start this section by saying that we are talking about legitimate small and personal massaging tools. You can go to novelty stores like Spencer's and find "personal massagers" that double as – well – personal fulfillment tools. Handheld massagers can be a Godsend for people with muscle spasms and knots that just won't release with hand stimulation.

Whenever one suffers from backache the first solution to this problem strike their mind is personal massager. For a long time now, personal massagers have done wonders to the nagging backaches and have provided positive results.

With the changing time and technology, more and more advancements have been witnessed in personal massagers too. As now they have become more techno and also highly effective. In short if you are suffering from prolonged backache then it is wise in having a personal massager is the sure shot solution.

You will be amazed to know that earlier personal massagers were prescribed as a cure for hysteria. Don't be hysterical but yes you can cure your stress with the help of personal massager without a trip to the doctor.

Apart from that latest personal massagers are also compact and discreet. This means now nobody will come to know that you are actually using a personal massager.

Major technical advancements have been also witnessed in the personal massagers as now people don't like to go for traditional personal massager as they have an option for hand held massager. By using hand held massager you can actually massage the particular spot where you want

to. This means at your own convenience and at your aching place. Isn't it felt nice and great?

A majority of the personal massagers or hand held massagers are devised in keeping the massage therapy in mind. This massage therapy was and is in high demand every time because its magical touch based body work helps in stress relieving and managing chronic pain. This is the reason why these days hand held massagers or personal massagers are being sold like hot cakes.

People love to own one as this proves wonders for them at the time of chronic and nagging pain. Popular and graceful personal massagers deliver soothing oscillating vibrations whenever and wherever you want to relax, ease tension or just feels good.

In short you don't have to lie down for massaging as it can be done anywhere and at any point of time. Convenient and compact personal massagers feel great anywhere. Oscillation massage technology focuses 100% on the vibration energy in the massage head, not in your hands.

Thus, what you are waiting for if you are having ailing backache and have tried all the treatments but no use then this is the time to use personal massager!

What should you look for? The first thing that you have to do is to decide which massager you actually need. So many companies are offering so much. Always read your manual that comes with your massagers and follow the instructions given. You should follow the advised precautions.

Purchasing your own massager can end up saving you lots of money as well as time. You can get massage in the comforts of your home and while doing other activities as well. You can choose your own massage time.

However, using a personal massager does have its drawbacks. You have to experiment or explore seriously to find out what types of massagers will be most beneficial to you. Many people get benefits both physically and mentally from all types of massage. However, you will miss the caring and experienced touch of the human touch you get with a traditional massage.

Once you have found a hand-held massager that you think will work for you, just apply its vibrating and/or heat options to the areas that are causing you pain and let it do its job.

Take your time and do research before you buy home based portable massage tool for personal use. If you find that your massager causes any pain, discontinue use. It is a good idea to consult your doctor if you have

any questions. Remember the personal massager's sole purpose is to help you and comfort you.

Another very popular method of massage doesn't involve manipulating the muscles. It simply involves the healing power of touch and applying pressure to certain areas of the body to relieve pain.

Acupressure

Acupressure is a type of massage that is often used as a way to cure ailments naturally without drugs. It involves touch, just like massage, but with acupressure, you apply light pressure to one area on the body and hold it there rather than kneading the skin as in a traditional massage.

Acupressure can be performed by another person; however, it is probably best if self-performed. It is, in fact, quite a detailed process, but it can provide some great benefits!

Acupressure is an ancient healing art that uses the fingers to press key points on the surface of the skin to stimulate the body's natural self-curative abilities. When these points are pressed, they release muscular tension and promote the circulation of blood and the body's life force to aid healing.

Acupuncture and acupressure use the same points, but acupuncture employs needles, while acupressure uses the gentle but firm pressure of hands (and even feet). There is a massive amount of scientific data that demonstrates why and how acupuncture is effective.

But acupressure, the older of the two traditions, was neglected after the Chinese developed more technological methods for stimulating points with needles and electricity. Acupressure, however, continues to be the most effective method for self-treatment of tension-related ailments by using the power and sensitivity of the human hand.

Foremost among the advantages of acupressure's healing touch is that it is safe to do on yourself and others - even if you've never done it before - so long as you follow the instructions and pay attention to the cautions. There are no side effects from drugs, because there are no drugs. And the only equipment needed are your own two hands. You can practice acupressure therapy any time, anywhere.

Acupressure can be effective in helping relieve headaches, eyestrain, sinus problems, neck pain, backaches, arthritis, muscle aches, and tension due to stress. It can also relieve ulcer pain, menstrual cramps, lower back aches, constipation, anxiety, indigestion, and insomnia.

There are also great advantages to using acupressure as a way to balance the body and maintain good health. The healing touch of acupressure reduces tension, increases circulation, and enables the body to relax deeply. By relieving stress, acupressure strengthens resistance to disease and promotes wellness.

How Acupressure Works

In acupressure, local symptoms are considered an expression of the condition of the body as a whole. A tension headache, for instance, may be rooted in the shoulder and neck area. Thus acupressure focuses on relieving pain and discomfort as well as on responding to tension before it develops into a "disease" that is, before the constrictions and imbalances can do further damage.

By using a combination of self-help methods such as trigger point stimulation, deep breathing, range-of-motion exercises, and relaxation techniques, you can improve your condition as well as feel more alive, healthy, and in harmony with your life.

Many of the health problems in our society - from bad backs to arthritis - are the result of living unnaturally. Stress, tension, lack of exercise, poor eating habits, and poor posture contribute to the epidemic of degenerative diseases in our culture. Acupressure is one way to help your body fight back and balance itself in the face of the pressures of modern life.

Acupressure points (also called potent points) are places on the skin that are especially sensitive to bioelectrical impulses in the body and conduct those impulses readily.

Traditionally, Asian cultures conceived of the points as junctures of special pathways that carried the human energy that the Chinese call *chi* and the Japanese call *ki*. Western scientists have also mapped out and proven the existence of this system of body points by using sensitive electrical devices.

Stimulating these points with pressure, needles, or heat triggers the release of *endorphins*, which are the neurochemicals that relieve pain. As a result, pain is blocked and the flow of blood and oxygen to the affected area is increased. This causes the muscles to relax and promotes healing.

Because acupressure inhibits the pain signals sent to the brain through a mild, fairly painless stimulation, it has been described as closing the "gates" of the pain-signaling system, preventing painful sensations from passing through the spinal cord to the brain.¹

Besides relieving pain, acupressure can help rebalance the body by dissolving tensions and stresses that keep it from functioning smoothly and that inhibit the immune system. Acupressure enables the body to adapt to environmental changes and resist illness.

Tension tends to concentrate around acupressure points. When a muscle is chronically tense or in spasm, the muscle fibers contract due to the secretion of lactic acid caused by fatigue, trauma, stress, chemical imbalances, or poor circulation. For instance, when you are under a great deal of stress you may find you have difficulty breathing. Certain acupressure points relieve chest tension and enable you to breathe deeply.

As a point is pressed, the muscle tension yields to the finger pressure, enabling the fibers to elongate and relax, blood to flow freely, and toxins to be released and eliminated. Increased circulation also brings more oxygen and other nutrients to affected areas.

This increases the body's resistance to illness and promotes a longer, healthier, more vital life. When the blood and bioelectrical energy circulate properly, we have a greater sense of harmony, health, and well-being.

Acupressure's potent points can be used to enhance many aspects of life. In addition to managing stress, you can use acupressure to relieve and prevent sports injuries. Sports massage has been widely used by athletes before and after Olympic events. Acupressure complements sports medicine treatments by using points and massage techniques to improve muscle tone and circulation and relieve neuromuscular problems.

The Chinese have also used acupressure as a beauty treatment for thousands of years. You can use potent points to improve skin condition and tone and relax the facial muscles, which can lessen the appearance of wrinkles without drugs.

Although acupressure is not a substitute for medical care, it is often an appropriate complementary treatment. It can, for instance, speed the healing of a broken bone once it has been set, or aid a cancer patient by helping to alleviate some of the associated pain and anxiety of the disease.

Similarly, acupressure can be an effective adjunct to chiropractic treatment. By relaxing and toning the back muscles, acupressure makes the spinal adjustments easier and more effective, and the results last longer. In fact, the two therapies were originally practiced together in ancient China.

Psychotherapy patients can derive benefits from acupressure by using it to heighten body awareness and deal with stress. When powerful emotions are free and unresolved, the body stores the resulting tension in the

muscles. Acupressure can help restore emotional balance by releasing the accumulated tension caused by repressed feelings.

An acupressure point actually has two identities and ways of working. When you stimulate a point in the same area where you feel pain or tension, it's called a *local* point. That same point can also relieve pain in a part of the body that is distant from the point, in which case it is called a *trigger* point.

This triggering mechanism works through a human electrical channel called a *meridian*. The meridians are pathways that connect the acupressure points to each other as well as to the internal organs. Just as blood vessels carry the blood that nourishes the body physically, the meridians are distinct channels that circulate electrical energy throughout the body.

They are thought to be part of a master communications system of universal life energy, connecting the organs with all sensory, physiological, and emotional aspects of the body. This physical network of energy also contains key points that we can use to deepen our spiritual awareness as we heal ourselves,

Because the stimulation of one point can send a healing message to other parts of the body, each acupressure point can benefit a variety of complaints and symptoms. Therefore, in the following chapters you will find a particular acupressure point used for a variety of problems.

The highly effective acupressure point in the webbing between your thumb and index finger, for instance, is not only beneficial for relieving arthritic pain in the hand, but also benefits the colon and relieves problems in the facial area and the head, including headaches, toothaches, and sinus problems.

Tonic points improve your condition and maintain general health. They strengthen the overall body system and fortify various internal organs and vital systems of the body.

Locating A Pressure Point

You locate an acupressure point by referring to anatomical landmarks. To help you find them, all of the points in this book are illustrated with a description of these landmarks (such as bone indentations and protrusions).

Some acupressure points lie underneath major muscle groups. While points near a bone structure usually lie in an indentation, muscular points lie within a muscular cord, band, or knot of tension. To stimulate the point, press directly on the cord or into the hollow.

As acupressure evolved, each of the 365 points was named poetically, originally with a Chinese character. The imagery of its name offers insight into either a point's benefits or location.

For instance, the name Hidden Clarity refers to the mental benefit of the point: It clears the mind. Shoulder's Corner refers to that point's location. The Three Mile Point earned its name because it gives a person an extra three miles of energy. Runners and hikers have used this famous point to increase stamina and endurance.

Some of the names of the acupressure points also serve as a powerful meditation tool. By pressing a point and silently repeating its name while you visualize its benefit and breathe deeply, you can realize the full potential power that each point offers. As you hold the Sea of Vitality points in your lower back, breathe deeply and visualize each breath replenishing your deep reservoir of vitality. Use the power of your mind to strengthen and help heal your lower back.

You can create affirmations with the names of the points -- powerful action statements that amplify a point's benefits. For example, hold the Letting Go points on the upper, outer chest with your fingertips. Breathe deeply. Imagine yourself letting go of tension, frustration, and stress. As you hold and breathe into these points, repeat to yourself that you are now letting go of all negativity and irritability.

In addition to its name, each point was assigned an identification number to track its placement along the body. Point location numbers, such as St 3 or GI3 21, are a standard referencing system used by professional acupressurists and acupuncturists and so I use them as an additional label, too. These notations are explained in the Glossary, but you do not need to know or remember any of these numbers to practice the self-acupressure techniques in this book.

Acupressure Techniques

Several different kinds of acupressure are currently practiced, although the same ancient trigger points are used in all of them. Varying rhythms, pressures, and techniques create different styles of acupressure, just as different forms of music use the same notes but combine them in distinctive ways.

Shiatsu, for instance, the most well-known style of acupressure, can be quite vigorous, with firm pressure applied to each point for only three to five seconds. Another kind of acupressure gently holds each point for a

minute or more. Pressing with an intermittent, fast beat is stimulating; a slower pressure creates a deeply relaxing effect on the body.

Here are the basic techniques to use in acupressure:

Firm pressure is the most fundamental technique. Use thumbs, fingers, palms, the side of the hand, or knuckles to apply steady, stationary pressure. To relax an area or relieve pain, apply pressure gradually and hold without any movement for several minutes at a time. One minute of steady pressure (when applied gradually) calms and relaxes the nervous system, promoting greater healing. To stimulate the area, apply pressure for only four or five seconds.

Slow motion kneading uses the thumbs and fingers along with the heels of the hands to squeeze large muscle groups firmly. The motion is similar to that of kneading a large mass of dough. Simply lean the weight of your upper body into the muscle as you press to make it soft and pliable. This relieves general stiffness, shoulder and neck tension, constipation, and spasms in the calf muscles.

Brisk rubbing uses friction to stimulate the blood and lymph. Rub the skin lightly to relieve chilling, swelling, and numbness by increasing circulation, as well as to benefit the nerves and tone of the skin.

Quick tapping with fingertips stimulates muscles on unprotected, tender areas of the body such as the face. For larger areas of the body, such as the back or buttocks, use a loose fist. This can improve the functioning of nerves and sluggish muscles in the area.

How To Apply Pressure

Use prolonged finger pressure directly on the point; gradual, steady, penetrating pressure for approximately three minutes is ideal. Each point will feel somewhat different when you press it; some points feel tense, while others are often sore or ache when pressed. How much pressure to apply to any point depends on how fit you are.

A general guideline to follow is that the pressure should be firm enough so that it "hurts good" - in other words, something between pleasant, firm pressure and outright pain. The more developed the muscles are, the more pressure you should apply.

If you feel extreme (or increasing) sensitivity or pain, gradually decrease the pressure until you find a balance between pain and pleasure.

Acupressure is not meant to increase your tolerance of pain, so do not think of it as a test of endurance. Do not continue to press a point that is excruciatingly painful. Usually, however, if you firmly hold the point long enough (up to 2 minutes using the middle finger with your index and ring fingers on either side as support), the pain will diminish.

Note that sometimes when you hold a point, you'll feel pain in another part of your body. This phenomenon is called referred pain and indicates that those areas are related. You should press points in these related areas as well to release blockages.

The middle finger is the longest and strongest of your fingers and is best suited for applying self-acupressure. The thumb is strong, too, but often lacks sensitivity. If you find that your hand is generally weak or hurts when you apply finger pressure, you can use the knuckles or your fist or other tools, such as an avocado pit, a golf ball, or a pencil eraser.

Although you may be tempted to massage or rub the entire area, it is best just to hold the point steadily with direct finger pressure. The rule of thumb is to apply slow, firm pressure on the point at a 90 degree angle from the surface of the skin.

If you are pulling the skin, then the angle of pressure is incorrect. Consciously and gradually direct the pressure into the center of the part of the body you are working on. It's important to apply and release finger pressure gradually because this allows the tissues time to respond, promoting healing. The better your concentration as you move your fingers slowly into and out of the point, the more effective the treatment will be.

After repeated acupressure sessions using different degrees of pressure, you will begin to feel a pulse at the point. This pulsation is a good sign - it means that circulation has increased. Pay attention to the type of pulse you feel. If it's very faint or throbbing, hold the point longer until the pulse balances.

If your hand gets tired, slowly withdraw pressure from the point, gently shake out your hand, and take a few deep breaths. When you're ready, go back to the point and gradually apply pressure until you reach the depth where it hurts good.

Again, press directly on painful site (which often moves, so follow and stay with it) until you feel a clear, regular pulse or until the pain diminishes. Then slowly decrease the finger pressure, ending with about twenty seconds of light touch.

When you have located the point and your fingers are comfortably positioned right on the spot gradually lean your weight toward the point to apply the pressure. If you're pressing a point on your foot, for instance, bend your leg and apply pressure by slowly leaning forward.

Using the weight of your upper body (and not just your hands) enables you to apply firm pressure without strain. Direct the pressure perpendicularly to the surface of the skin as you take several long, slow, deep breaths. Hold for a few minutes until you feel a regular pulse or until the soreness at the point decreases. Then gradually release the pressure, finishing with a soothing touch.

Each body - and each area of the body - requires a different amount of pressure. If it hurts a great deal when you apply pressure on a point, then use light touch instead of pressure. The calves, the face, and genital areas are sensitive. The back, buttocks, and shoulders, especially if the musculature is developed, usually need deeper, firmer pressure.

To achieve the full benefit of self-acupressure, you should choose a comfortable, private environment that lends itself to deep relaxation. You can use acupressure at work, however, if you can take a ten-minute break. Choose whatever position you find most comfortable - either sitting or lying down. As you press points in different areas, feel free to reposition your body so that your muscles can relax completely.

Ideally, you should wear comfortable clothing. Tight collars, belts, pants, or shoes can obstruct circulation. I recommend wearing natural fibers that breathe, such as cotton or wool blends. Also, it's a good idea to keep your fingernails trimmed fairly short to prevent any discomfort or injury to the skin.

Avoid practicing acupressure right before a big meal or on a full stomach. Wait until at least an hour after eating a light meal and even longer after eating a heavy meal. Practicing a complete acupressure routine when your stomach is full can inhibit the flow of blood and may cause nausea.

However, simply pressing one or two points to relieve indigestion or hiccups is perfectly safe. Avoid iced drinks (especially during the winter months); because extreme cold generally weakens your system and can counteract the benefits of acupressure. A cup of hot herbal tea would be good after an acupressure session along with a period of deep relaxation.

For optimal results, you should perform the acupressure routines daily, whether you are using acupressure to maintain your health or to help relieve an ailment. If you are using acupressure for the latter reason, continue using

these same points even after you've obtained relief. This can prevent recurrence. If you cannot practice every day, treating yourself to acupressure two or three times a week can still be effective.

Limit yourself acupressure sessions to an hour at the most. When you begin practicing acupressure, you may find that you are most comfortable holding a point for two to three minutes. You may find that you can gradually over two to three months - work up to holding points longer, but do not hold any one point longer than ten minutes.

And do not work any single area of the body, such as the abdominal area or the face, for longer than 15 minutes. The effects of acupressure can be quite strong. If you work too long, too much energy is released and complications, such as nausea and headaches, can occur.

Breathing

Breathing is the most profoundly effective tool known for purifying and revitalizing the body. When your breath is shallow, all your body's vital systems function at a minimum level. If your breath is long and deep, however, the respiratory system functions properly, and the body cells become fully oxygenated.

Deep breathing helps the potent points release any pain or tension and encourages healing energy to flow throughout the body. As you practice the self-acupressure routines in this book and concentrate on breathing deeply into your abdomen, you will help your body heal itself and generate a great feeling of well-being.

Concentrated breathing can especially help you better use a potent point that is painful. Close your eyes, focus your attention on the painful spot, breathe deeply, and imagine that you are breathing healing energy into the affected area as you hold the point gently.

Inhale deeply into the abdomen letting your belly expand. Feel the breath reach into the depths of the belly. Exhale slowly, letting the energy that you drew in now circulate throughout your body. Do not use a massaging movement.

Focus on breathing into the pain for three full minutes. Often, poor circulation is indicated by a point that is sore when pressed. By taking long, deep breaths and pressing gently for three minutes you will close the nervous system's pain gates and help the area heal. This breathing technique will enhance the healing benefits of all the acupressure routines in

this book.

Things To Be Careful Of

Just as with any type of self-therapy, there are some precautions that you should be aware of. Acupressure is no different. Take heed of the following advice:

- Apply finger pressure in a slow, rhythmic manner to enable the layers of tissue and the internal organs to respond. Never press any area in an abrupt, forceful, or jarring way.
- Use the abdominal points cautiously, especially if you are ill. Avoid the abdominal area entirely if you have a life-threatening disease, especially intestinal cancer, tuberculosis, serious cardiac conditions, and leukemia. Avoid the abdominal area during pregnancy as well.
- Special care should be taken when using acupressure during pregnancy. There are certain parts of the body that should be avoided. Check with your doctor before performing any type of acupressure on a pregnant woman.
- Lymph areas, such as the groin, the area of the throat just below the ears, and the outer breast near the armpits, are very sensitive. These areas should be touched only lightly and not pressed.
- Do not work directly on a serious burn, an ulcerous condition, or an infection: for these conditions, medical care alone is indicated.
- Do not work directly on a recently formed scar. During the first month after an injury or operation, do not apply pressure directly on the affected site. However, gentle continuous holding a few inches away from the periphery of the injury will stimulate the area and help it heal.
- After an acupressure session, your body heat is lowered; thus your resistance to cold is also lower. Because the tensions have been released, your body's vital energies are concentrating inward to maximize healing. Your body will be more vulnerable, so be sure to

wear extra clothing and keep warm when you finish an acupressure routine.

Acupressure For Specific Problems

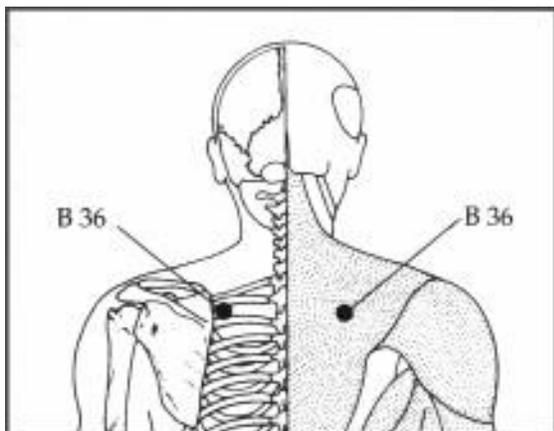
Obviously, we can't tell you about every single way to get rid of pain using acupressure, but we can touch on a few of the more common ailments and guide you towards using acupressure for them.

Colds and Flu

Colds are caused by viruses that thrive in your nose and throat when the temperature, acidity, and moisture suit them. When you are run down and your resistance is low, your ability to adapt to environmental changes weakens, making it easier to catch a cold, and the mucous membranes become a perfect breeding ground for viruses. Cold symptoms are the body's attempt to protect itself from these intruders. When a virus enters your nose, for instance, the body secretes more mucus to flush it away.

Because acupressure stimulates your body to expel the virus more quickly, it may seem at first that your cold is worsening. But your body is simply progressing through the symptoms faster than usual. Although acupressure cannot cure a cold, working on certain points can help you get better quicker and increase your resistance to future colds.

Potent point B 36, called Bearing Support, is especially good for stimulating the body's natural resistance to colds and the flu. It's located near the spine, off the tips of the shoulder blades. According to traditional Chinese medicine, wind and cold enter the pores of the skin at this point. The muscles in this upper back area tend to get tense just before a cold or flu takes hold.



Here are the pressure point locations for alleviating the symptoms of a cold or the flu:

Drilling Bamboo (B 2)

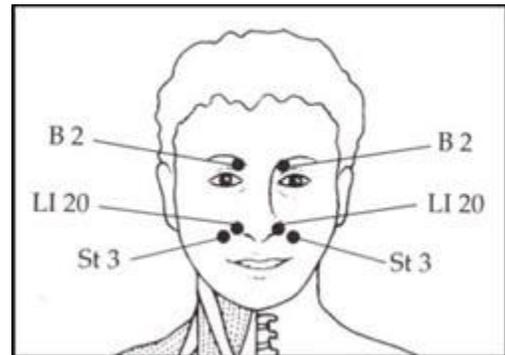
Location: In the indentations of the eye sockets, on either side of where the bridge of the nose meets the ridge of the eyebrows.

Benefits: Relieves colds, sinus congestion, frontal headaches, and tired eyes.

Facial Beauty (St 3)

Location: At the bottom of the cheekbone, directly below the pupil.

Benefits: Relieves stuffy nose, head congestion, burning eyes, eye fatigue, and eye pressure.



Welcoming Perfume (LI 20)

Location: On either cheek, just outside each nostril.

Benefits: Relieves nasal congestion, sinus pain, facial paralysis, and facial swelling.

Crooked Pond (LI 11)

Location: At the outer end of the elbow crease.

Benefits: Relieves cold symptoms, fever, constipation, and elbow pain; strengthens the immune system.

Joining the Valley (Hoku) (LI 4)

Caution: This point is forbidden for pregnant women because its stimulation can cause premature contractions in the uterus.

Location: At the highest spot of the muscle on the back of the hand that protrudes when the thumb and index finger are close together.

Benefits: Relieves colds, flu, head congestion, constipation, and headaches.

Gates of Consciousness (GB 20)

Location: Below the base of the skull, in the hollows on both sides, two to three inches apart depending on the size of the head.

Benefits: Relieves headaches, head congestion, arthritis, neck pain, and irritability.

Wind Mansion (GV 16)

Location: In the center of the back of the head, in the large hollow under the base of the skull.

Benefits: Relieves head congestion, red eyes, mental stress, headaches, and stiff neck.

Third Eye Point (GV 24.5)

Location: Directly between the eyebrows, in the indentation where the bridge of the nose meets the center of your forehead.

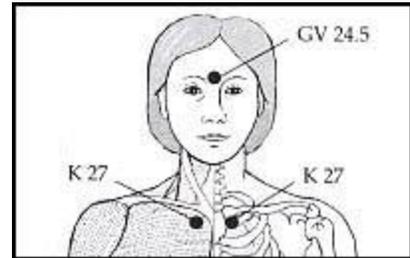
Benefits: Relieves head congestion, stuffy nose, and headaches.

Elegant Mansion (K 27)

Location: In the hollow below the collarbone next to the breastbone.

Benefits: Relieves chest congestion, breathing difficulties, coughing, and sore throats.

Don't use all of these points, just one or two as time permits.



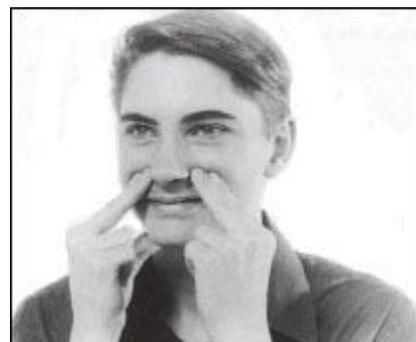
Step 1

Press into B 2: Use your thumbs on the upper ridge of your eye socket to press into the slight hollow near the bridge of your nose for one minute. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, letting the weight of your head relax forward onto your thumbs.



Step 2

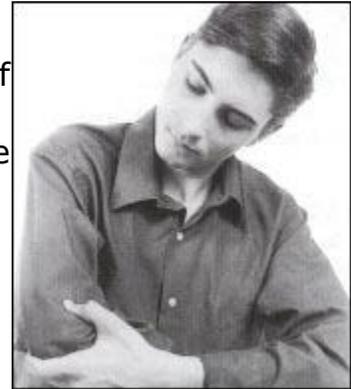
Press St 3 and LI 20: Place both of your middle fingers beside your nostrils and your index fingers next to them; gradually press up and underneath the cheekbones for one minute. You can easily



teach this step to your child to help relieve nasal congestion.

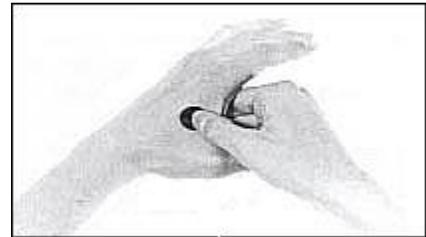
Step 3

Press both LI 11: Bend your arm and place your thumb at the- end of the elbow crease on the outside of your forearm. Curve your fingers to press firmly into the elbow joint for one minute. Repeat on your opposite arm.



Step 4

Press LI 4 firmly: Spread your left thumb and index finger apart. Place your right thumb in the webbing on the back of your left hand and your fingertips on the palm directly behind your thumb. Firmly squeeze your thumb and index finger of your right hand together to press into the webbing. Angle the pressure toward the bone that connects with your left index finger, and hold for one minute. Then switch hands.



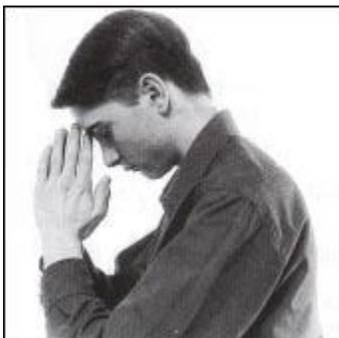
Step 5

Firmly press GB 20: Now close your eyes and place your thumbs underneath the base of your skull, two to three inches apart. Slowly tilt your head back and apply pressure gradually, holding the position for one minute to fully release these important cold-relief points.



Step 6

Firmly press GV 16: Place the tips of your middle fingers into the hollow in the center of the base of your skull. Keeping your fingers on the point, you should inhale as you tilt your head back and exhale as you relax your head forward. Continue to slowly rock your head back and forward, and breathe deeply while you hold this important point for relieving head congestion.



Step 7

Touch the GV 24.5: Bring your palms together and use your middle and index fingers to lightly touch the Third Eye Point located between your eyebrows.

Breathe deeply as you hold this point for balancing your endocrine system.

Step 8

Firmly press K 27: Place your fingertips on the protrusions of your collarbone, then slide your fingers down and outward into the first indentation in between the bones. Press into this hollow as you breathe deeply and visualize the congestion clearing.



Headaches and Migraines

First, you'll need to locate the following pressure points:

Gates of Consciousness (GB 20)

Location: two inches out from the middle of your neck, underneath the base of the skull.

Benefits: Relieves the pain and pressure of a headache. Also relieves jaw and neck pain.

LV-3

Location: On the top of your foot in the valley between the big toe and second toe.

LI-4

Location: In the webbing between the thumb and index finger at the highest spot of the muscle when the thumb and index finger are brought close together

TW-5

Location: on the forearm, three finger widths above the wrist crease, between the two bones.

When trying to relieve headache or migraine pain, start by sitting down in a chair and bending over, with your elbows propped on a table or desk. This will make holding these points most comfortable. Breathe deeply and press firmly for one to two minutes.

Step 1:

Massage your head as if you were shampooing your hair.

Step 2:

Place your thumbs underneath the base of the skull on either side of the spinal column. Tilt your head back slightly and press upward for 2 minutes while breathing deeply.

Step 3:

Locate GB 20. Apply deep thumb pressure for at least a minute.

Step 4:

Locate LV 3. Using either your thumb or your right heel, apply pressure on top of this spot and rub for one minute. Then switch and work the opposite foot.

For headaches on the forehead and above the eyes:

Locate Li 4. Apply pressure for two minutes. Use this in combination with pressure on LV 3 to relax the jaw.

For headache on the sides of the head or temples:

Locate TW 5. Apply pressure for two minutes.

For general headaches

Locate each of the pressure points outlined above and apply deep thumb pressure to each for a minimum of two minutes.

Chronic Back Pain

First, locate the following pressure points:

B-123

Location: Slightly higher than the waist about two finger widths on both sides of the spine.

B-140

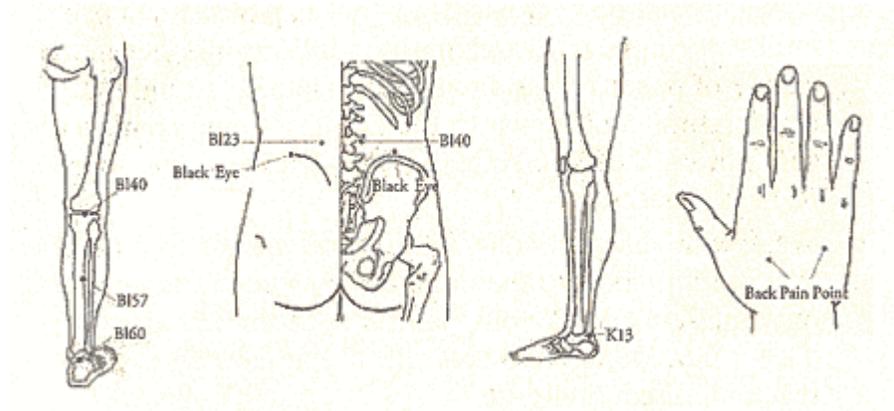
Location: The middle of the crease of the back.

B-157

Location: The depression underneath the large muscle, about halfway between the knee crease and the heel

B-160 Ki3

Location: The dent behind the anklebone on both sides.



Step 1:

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Put your hands on your back. Use your palms, or the heel of the palms to scrub up and down from your waist to sacrum 100 times.

Step 2:

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Place your hands on your back just below your waist. Your thumbs are right on two acupressure points, which are called "Back Eyes." Gently press these two points. Meanwhile slowly rotate your body forward, backward, left, and right. Make loose fists and gently tap against this point for one minute.

Step 3:

Find the most painful spot. Gently tap against the painful spot 30 times. Gently knead for one minute.

Step 4:

Use your thumb to gently press and knead B123 for about one minute.

Step 5:

Lie down on your stomach. Ask another person to use the thumb to gently press B140 for one minute.

Step 6:

Gently press and knead B157 for one minute.

Step 7:

Use your thumb and index finger to pinch B160 Ki3. Do this 10 times.

Step 8:

Use your thumb to gently press and knead the point at the back of your hand, two finger-widths from the wrist crease. One is between the ring and middle fingers. Another is between the index and middle fingers ("Back Pain Point"). Do this for one minute.

Weight Control

This acupuncture for weight control can be performed before getting up in the morning and after going to bed at night. For better weight control, do the following once a day:

- Place your right palm on your bellybutton and your left on top of the right. Rub your abdomen outward in a counterclockwise direction 100 times.
- Put the left palm on the bottom and start from the outer edge of the abdomen and rub inward in a clockwise direction. Repeat on opposite side.
- Place your palms on the abdomen area, push down to pubic area 100 times.
- Place your right palm on the lower edge of right ribs. Push toward left groin area 50 times. Repeat on the other side.
- Finally, press and knead your arms and legs for 10 minutes.

This is another simple weight control massage:

- Get a long towel.
- Put cornstarch or massage oil on your waist to protect your skin. Your waist should be bare.

- Stand feet shoulder width apart and wrap the towel around the back of your waist.
- Hold the two ends of the towel in your hands and pull it back and forth so it scrapes across your waist.
- Do this until you feel heat and the skin is flush.

There are tons and tons of ways to use acupressure to relieve that which ails you. Due to space constraints, we simply cannot list all of the techniques. Do your research, and you will find that many types of pain can be relieved with acupressure.

Performing acupressure isn't always easy. You may find out that the techniques you are trying may not be giving you the results you want.

If You Feel It's Not Working

Acupressure isn't an exact science. It's a technique that must be practiced in order for it to work. The reason it needs to be practiced is because the points you are looking for are very specific and often hard to find if you don't know what you are doing.

I once had someone use acupressure on me to relieve a headache. When they did it to me, I felt immediate relief. However, when I tried it later myself, I couldn't get the same effect. Why? Because they knew exactly where to touch to give me the relief I needed. It took me a few weeks to find those points, but once I did – WOW!

When you are not feeling any effects from pressing points, several things may be the case.

You may not be pressing on the exact right spot (acupuncture points are about 0.5 mm diameter, so you'll have to be precise). Try different spots around the location you first tried.

You shouldn't press lightly, but you shouldn't hurt yourself either. Also, don't press for just a few seconds (although if you're very sensitive you might already notice effects then).

To feel if acupressure is working (for knowing that the location of the point is accurate), try to sense what's happening in your face. Almost all points we have given you have some effect. Many of the points also have

some subtle effect on the quality of vision. You may see more clearly and more colors. Meditation will develop your ability to feel the effects.

If you're using a point quite often or if you don't need a point, the effect may become very little or unnoticeable. The body is very unique when it comes to what works and what doesn't. If you don't need pain relief in a certain spot – no matter how much you think you do – your body will not respond.

If you're tense, you may not feel much, although usually you'll become less tense by using the techniques we've outlined.

Conclusion

Probably one of the most powerful preventive medicine tools available to us is that of Massage. It is one of the oldest forms of treatment and can be traced back many thousands of years to the ancient Greeks, Persians and Chinese who are said to have practiced massage as a spiritual art. The word Massage comes from the Greek 'massein' meaning 'to knead'.

Today in this fast paced 21st century, it could be argued that we've never known a more hectic style of living. When we become stressed our activity becomes strenuous and our energy requirements exceed supply.

Our bodies can become tired and stiff, our muscles cramped and sluggish with the overall feeling of being tense fatigued and stressed. But do we take time-out? Do we look for ways to relax and slow down? Do we decide to nurture ourselves a little? Usually not! Let's face it, most of us just soldier on. We are so caught up on the treadmill of our busy lives that we have forgotten how to listen to our bodies.

The experts and their statistics tell us that we are living longer than ever before. Our life expectancy is extending every few years with a result that most of us can now expect to live well into our eighties!

Perhaps this is one of the reasons that more and more people today are now taking responsibility for their own health and well being. People are looking to complementary therapies to aid the recovery from tension, stress and fatigue. In our determination to be healthy and remain healthy many of us now use massage as a powerful form of preventative medicine and as part of an integrated approach to our personal health care.

Massage is one of the easiest ways of attaining and maintaining good health and well being. It's a healing instinct, innate in all of us, to rub an aching knee, or stroke a furrowed brow. Headaches, aches and pains,

insomnia, tension and stress can all be alleviated with one simple instrument -- our hands.

The basis of massage is touch. There is increasing medical evidence to show the great value of touch. Touch is so natural that without it people become depressed and irritable.

Observations show that children brought up in families where parents and children touch each other are healthier and more able to withstand pain and infection than those children deprived of touch. They tend to sleep better, are more sociable and generally happier.

Despite all the evidence to show the benefits of touch, we are still hesitant about touching each other. We think this is due to confusion between sensuality and sexuality. Because we are so afraid of the connection between sex and touch, we have formalized touch.

There are only a few occasions when adults are allowed to touch each other freely. Massage removes the taboos of touching and allows people to touch in a positive way.

There are many, many benefits to massage. You deserve to show it to your loved one how to fully embrace those benefits and feel better in the process.

What's even better is that once you have mastered this art, you can begin teaching it to the people you love. Show them what you have learned and have them do it to you. Then both of you can gain benefits from massage and what it can offer.

With massage, you can improve your blood circulation, improve muscle tone and flexibility, and increase your endorphin levels. Endorphins are the natural hormones that make us feel good. When you increase endorphin levels, your body is better able to battle chronic pain. That's why a good body rubbing feels so wonderful!

When you use acupressure to focus on areas that really need help, you are doing yourself a huge favor. You are concentrating on specific problems, and doing everything you can to make those areas feel better.

And, as we've shown you, massage doesn't always require another person. You can perform effective self-massage techniques to release stress, rejuvenate your mind, and nearly instantly achieve a sense of well-being that will make you feel like a new person!

Get rid of the stereotypes that massage has taken on. Use massage to not only bring you closer to your partner, but to relieve pain and transport you to a state of relaxation that you've never known before.

It's more than worth it!