

Treat Yourself Right – Articles for Wellness

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Age is a State of Mind

Baby Boomers Combat Aging with Bodywork

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, preventing disease and injury is critical to reducing the expected growth of health-care costs headed our way, as more than 70 million U.S. baby boomers cross the 60-year-old threshold. Moreover, disease prevention is critical to, well, your health!

Whether you're a boomer who is running a marathon or running after your grandchildren, you know that growing older doesn't mean growing old. If you're wondering how to stave off the effects of aging, the preventative and restorative nature of massage and bodywork might be just what the body ordered.

and its elasticity, and toning muscle tissue. Massage also creates a stimulating cellular function in the hypodermis, dermis, and epidermis layers of the skin and increases the production of skin-nurturing sebum.

Immunity and Stress

If you're already a frequent recipient of massage, you know what the work does to combat daily stress. But did you know how detrimental those stressors can be?

Experts say the majority of disease we encounter today is associated with stress. Not only that, stress is a huge factor in premature aging of the body. Researchers say chronic stress ages the

Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.

-Etty Hillesum

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Massage therapy can play an important role in aging well and remaining youthful and healthy.

Improved Circulation, Healthier Skin

As our bodies age, our circulation slows and our skin loses its once youthful vitality. Experts say the mechanical nature of massage combats these effects by increasing circulation through the manipulation of tissue, improving the appearance and condition of the skin

body, weakens immune cell function, and can make cells appear up to 17 years older than they really are. Through its effects, massage deftly attacks stress, while boosting the immune system.

Massage encourages the release of oxytocin, a stress-reducing hormone in the body most often associated with

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birth and bonding, and activates the parasympathetic nervous system and its relaxation response. Massage also decreases beta brainwave activity, increases dopamine and serotonin levels in the body, and reduces cortisol levels, all of which are linked to decreased stress.

Squashing the Pain

Part of the aging process, unfortunately, involves dealing with aches and pains. You might find a day of gardening brings on back pain you never experienced before, or your biking regimen now requires greater recovery time afterward. Even though pain is a constant source of grief for an aging body, massage can make a difference.

The passive movement in massage keeps joints more mobile and stimulates the synovial fluid, which lubricates the joints and nourishes the articular cartilage. Massage also prompts the release of endorphins and other pain-reducing neurochemicals.

In addition to the pains of physical exertion an aging body experiences, the discomfort caused by arthritis can be just as debilitating. Experts predict that one-third of Americans will get arthritis as they age. Ironically, most arthritis sufferers may not think of massage when they start to explore which therapies might ease their pain. While it is doubtful an arthritic joint can "heal" completely with massage, it can feel better. And for an arthritis sufferer, better is a welcome word, particularly when there are no side effects involved.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, an increasing number of doctors are recommending massage to their arthritis patients to help relieve the pain and stiffness caused by their disease. Massage can increase circulation around painful joints, bringing healing oxygen and nutrients, including amino acids, to rebuild tissue. Many massage therapists report that their arthritic clients find better and longer-lasting relief from massage than from pharmaceuticals.

Whether its reducing the symptoms of arthritis, or simply addressing the aches and pains of living an active life, massage can play an important role in aging well.

Bennies for Boomers

The benefits from massage and bodywork can help bodies of all ages, especially for baby boomers. Research has shown that massage:

- Improves range of motion and decreases low-back pain.
- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles.
- Reduces swelling and scar tissue.
- Reduces recovery time from injury/surgery.
- Reduces stress, a major contributor to disease and ill health.
- Releases endorphins, the body's natural painkiller, thereby reducing the need for medications.
- Stimulates lymph flow and supports the body's natural process of detoxification.

Psychological Value

In addition to all the physical benefits massage and bodywork offers, there also are proven psychological changes we experience with massage. One of the reasons massage feels so relaxing is that there is a literal psychological benefit as dopamine and serotonin become balanced in the system. And when massage produces oxytocin in the body, there is a sense of being nurtured. Add that to the restorative effect that comes from those quiet moments during massage, and you've got a process that experts say is incredibly healing.

Aging, obviously, is a process none of us can avoid. As Benjamin Franklin said, "When you're finished changing, you're finished." Turn the inevitability of aging into a positive process of change and let massage and bodywork help you along the journey.



The aches and pains that often accompany the aging process can be managed with bodywork.

Is the Season Getting You Down?

Shine the Light on Winter Blues

In northern climates when the heavy snows fall and the sun moves south, many people find their moods shift from upbeat to downright depressed. The severe form of winter depression--called seasonal affective disorder, or SAD--affects at least two million North Americans. Another thirty-nine million experience milder symptoms of moodiness and extended sleep patterns that somewhat resemble hibernation.

Overeating, sleeping for prolonged periods, mood swings, carbohydrate cravings, and weight gain during winter months may be more than just symptoms of cabin fever. They can suggest a biochemical reaction caused by a lack of exposure to sunlight.

Like all living things, we humans are sensitive to the seasons and sunlight. We secrete a hormone called melatonin, which helps us sleep at night and stay awake during the day. Melatonin production is directly linked to sun exposure. So, as the days get shorter

during the winter, our bodies produce more and more melatonin and we can literally feel like going into a cave and hibernating.

Many SAD sufferers manage their seasonal depression with daily exposure to full-spectrum lamps or light boxes. By getting daily doses of natural light, they can fool their brains into thinking it's summertime, and their need to sleep decreases.

Recent research shows that timing these light therapy sessions to our natural biological clocks is even more beneficial than usage during the day. Exposure to natural spectrum bright light for thirty minutes on awakening is twice as effective as evening sessions, and one study found this practice actually had an 80 percent chance of sending SAD into remission.

If winter blues are getting to you, consider investing in a full spectrum lamp and use it first thing in the morning--because SAD is for the bears.



Loosen the grip of seasonal affective disorder.

The Case for Chocolate

New Studies Show Health Benefits

It's not like we need a specific reason to eat chocolate, but it doesn't hurt that studies are finding increasing health benefits associated with the popular indulgence. While chocolate is high in sugar and saturated fat, it does contain chemical compounds with proven benefits, so enjoy--in moderation--and expect to reap some of these rewards.

Improved Heart Health

A study in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that women over 70 who ate chocolate at least once a week were 35 percent less likely to suffer from heart disease during the survey period. Researchers suspect that the flavonoids found in chocolate, which are known to reduce blood pressure, likely improve overall cardiovascular health.

Reduced Liver Strain

These same flavonoids in dark chocolate that help decrease blood pressure can also reduce post-meal abdominal blood pressure spikes that strain the liver by widening and relaxing blood cells. A Spanish study of patients with end-stage liver disease showed that dark chocolate helped reduce some of the risks associated with conditions like cirrhosis.

Safer Pregnancy

Dark chocolate has been shown to help pregnant women avoid preeclampsia--a significant complication where blood pressure spikes to dangerous levels--by nearly 40 percent when consumed five times a week. Dark chocolate is especially rich in theobromine, which relaxes

muscles and dilates blood vessels. As an additional benefit, it also seems to improve circulation in the placenta.

Increased Endurance

Research out of the University of California, San Diego, demonstrated that mice given epicatechin, a flavonoid found in dark chocolate, could run for 50 percent longer than those who only drank water. The mice also grew new capillaries and mitochondria in their muscles, changes that explain their enhanced endurance capacity. Unfortunately, perhaps, for chocolate lovers, is that researchers say just one-sixth of 1 ounce of chocolate each day is the ideal serving size to receive this benefit.

*When you come
to the end of
your rope, tie a
knot and hang
on.*

-Franklin D Roosevelt

Happy New Year from The Relaxation Point!

Thanks to everyone who helped make 2011 at 108 W. Buffalo St. a memorable one. It has been a pleasure to meet so many wonderful people and also to be able to give back to so many individuals who give out their energy every day to help others. We look forward to seeing you again in 2012!

It is our intention to begin sending out occasional e-mail offering last minute specials to fill in gaps in our schedule. If you haven't already opted in to our e-mail list and are interested in receiving such e-mail, you can opt in through our website at:

<http://www.therelaxationpoint.com/contact.html>

Also, for anyone who would like to leave a testimonial about their experience at The Relaxation Point, we've added a page to our website with a form to submit your testimonial at:

<http://www.therelaxationpoint.com/testimonials.html>

Best wishes for a healthy and fulfilling 2012,

Joseph

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To book your next appointment, please call 607-379-1639.

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