

Massage as the Body's Workout

Can Bodywork Sometimes Make You Sore?

Shirley Vanderbilt

You've just had a wonderful massage, and you go home feeling both relaxed and rejuvenated. But later that night you feel like you're coming down with something. Or perhaps the next morning, you wake up with twinges of muscle soreness, maybe some fatigue, and you just don't feel yourself. What happened? Chances are it's the massage, and it's perfectly OK.

Keith Grant, head of the Sports and Deep Tissue Massage Department at McKinnon Institute in Oakland, Calif., says, "It's very much like doing a workout. If the muscles aren't used to it, they often respond with some soreness." Grant notes this should last for no more than a day or two. If it lasts longer, the

therapist can find all the kinks that have built up from daily stress and too little or too much exercise. The whole point of a therapeutic massage is to release that tension, work out the kinks, and help your body relax so it can function at an optimal level. All of this work stretches muscles, pushes blood into them, and gets things working again.

A Closer Look

There are several theories, in addition to muscle function, as to why people sometimes experience after-effects from massage.

Massage can stimulate the lymph system, which is comprised of several organs



A good massage can sometimes leave you feeling like you had a good workout.

massage may have been too intense, and the therapist should adjust for this in the next session. However, just as with exercise, when your body adjusts to having this type of workout, your physical response will also be less intense.

A professional massage is more than an ordinary backrub. Your massage

(thymus, tonsils, spleen, adenoids), hundreds of lymph nodes, and a multitude of vessels that run throughout the body. These lymphatic vessels carry a clear fluid, known as lymph, that circulates around the body's tissues, absorbing fluid, waste products, dead cells, bacteria, viruses, fats, and proteins

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*Forget not that
the earth
delights to feel
your bare feet
and the winds
long to play
with your hair.*

-Kahlil Gibran

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from the tissue as it goes, while also giving passage to immune cells as they're needed. Massage can sometimes stimulate the lymph system, helping to eliminate toxins from the body. And if the body contains a high level of environmental or dietary toxins, you could feel some mild, flu-like symptoms. While most people come out of a typical massage feeling nothing but relaxed, some people do report feeling a bit nauseous. If this is the case, make sure to drink plenty of water and perhaps take a slow walk. Movement creates a greater lymphatic response and will hurry the process along.

Grant points to another theory being closely examined by experts. Neurological sensitivity, or "sensitization," looks at the "whole response of what's going on in a person." As Grant explains, massage provides a significant amount of input to the central nervous system and the body responds to that increased information. Pain and other occasional after-effects may be the result of a system that has received more information than it can handle at that particular time. And because the amount of sensory input we receive during any day or week is always fluctuating, sometimes we may be overloaded and other times not. It depends on the total stress (emotional, spiritual and physical) being experienced by the body at that moment.

Minimizing Overload

So what can you do to minimize the sometimes uncomfortable side effects? It's important to communicate with your massage therapist regarding your expectations, as well as your current state of health. Your therapist can then tailor the massage to your personal needs and desires, and make adjustments in intensity or technique as the session proceeds. "I'd look at what's being done," says Grant. In some cases, a shorter or more soothing session may be more appropriate. In others, the therapist may need to change the kind of technique used. Much of this can be judged by how the person is feeling and responding during the massage.

In addition to communicating clearly with your practitioner throughout the session, following a few simple steps will

help ease tenderness and maximize benefits:

- UNDERSTAND THAT EVERY BODY REACTS DIFFERENTLY.

Your body is an organism made up of complex systems that react to a constantly changing influx of external factors.

- MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH PRACTICES.

This means keeping your mind free of negative clutter.

- DRINK PLENTY OF WATER IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING YOUR TREATMENT.

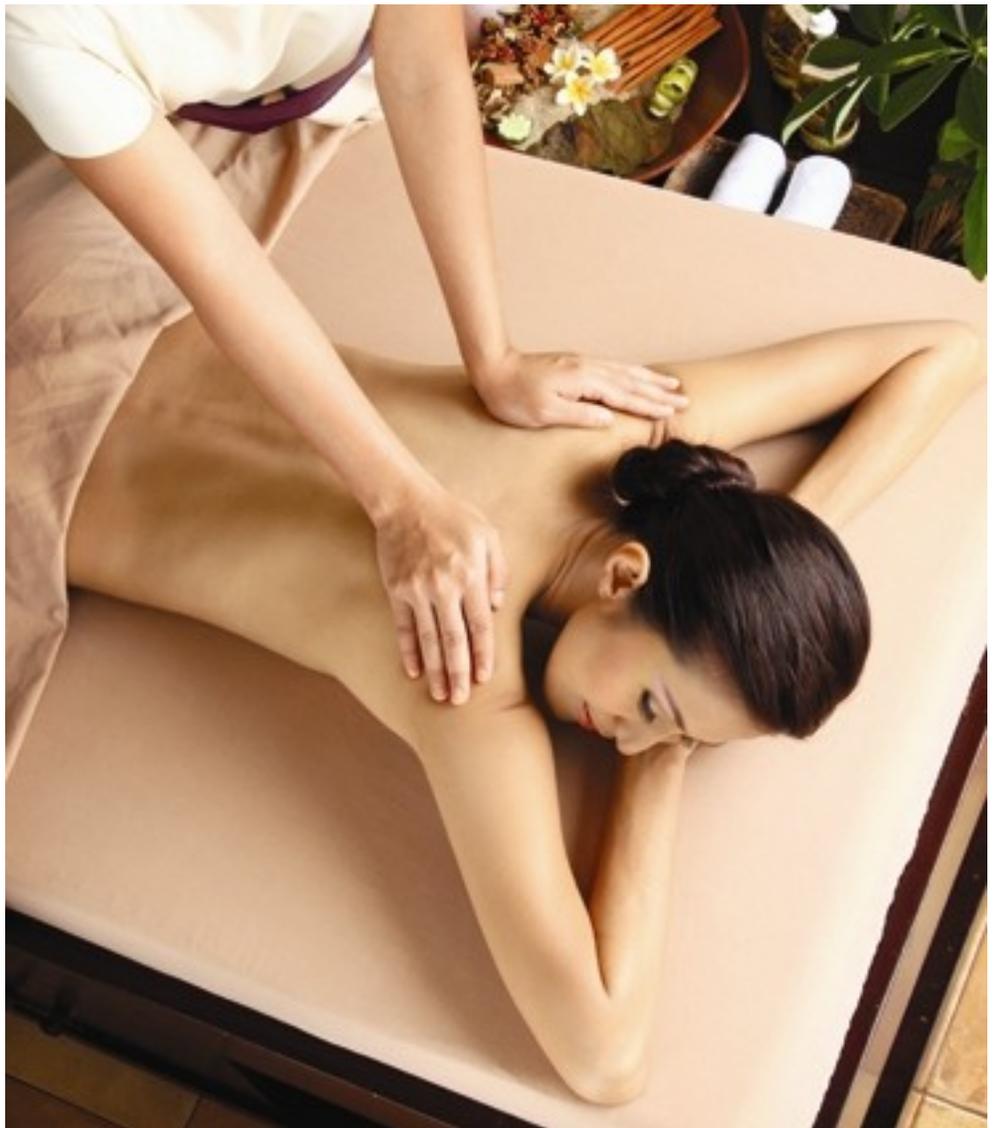
Continue to do so for the next day or two. This will rehydrate your tissues and ease the effects.

- TAKE IT EASY AFTER YOUR MASSAGE.

Go home, relax and just allow your body to find its balance naturally.

Getting a massage can do you a world of good. And getting massage frequently can do even more. This is the beauty of bodywork. Taking part in this form of regularly scheduled self-care can play a huge part in how healthy you'll be and how youthful you'll remain. Budgeting time and money for bodywork at consistent intervals is an investment in your health. And remember: just because massage feels like a pampering treat doesn't mean it is any less therapeutic. Consider massage appointments a necessary piece of your health plan, and work with your practitioner to establish a treatment schedule that best meets your needs.

Like exercise, making bodywork a habitual practice is good for your health. And if you wake up the next morning a little sore, it's probably because you had a really good massage.



Bodywork can stimulate the lymph system, which can help detox the body.

Managing Arthritis

Exercise and Bodywork Keep Joint Pain at Bay

The word arthritis strikes fear in the hearts of older adults. It often signifies aging, pain, inactivity, and disability. However, new research shows moderate physical exercise can actually ease arthritis symptoms by decreasing pain and increasing a person's likelihood of living a normal life.

Understanding Arthritis

The most common form of arthritis--osteoarthritis, or also known as degenerative arthritis--affects more than twenty million Americans. Osteoarthritis (literally meaning "bone-joint inflammation") is caused by wear and tear on joint surfaces and most frequently involves the hips, knees, lower back, neck, and fingers. More than half of people over sixty-five have some evidence of osteoarthritis on X-rays, although it doesn't always manifest as symptoms.

Many problems arise from a sedentary lifestyle. Joints lose flexibility and muscles lose strength, feeding the cycle of pain, inactivity, and more pain.

Exercise Offers Sweet Relief

Vigorous walking, swimming, and bicycling boost the release of powerful endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. When done four to five days a week, these aerobic activities improve general cardiovascular health and aid in weight management (obesity is the single biggest risk factor for osteoarthritis).

Strengthening and stretching exercises targeted at maintaining joint flexibility and muscle strength--especially for at-risk joints--slow the progression of degenerative arthritis. Yoga classes and moderate weight lifting programs are excellent ways to improve strength and flexibility. Bodywork can also provide relief.

If arthritis is slowing you down, get serious with your exercise plan. Consult your physician; work with a professional trainer, physical therapist, yoga instructor, or bodyworker; and start a gentle, progressive exercise program. Your joints will reward you for it, and you'll free yourself from arthritic pain.



Stretching can slow degenerative arthritis.

Coenzyme Q10

The Wrinkle Cure

Air pollutants, toxins, cigarette smoke, cell metabolism, exposure to the sun, and other environmental factors initiate free radicals, which can cause dangerous reactions that destroy cells and damage DNA, proteins, and fats. Free radicals also interfere with collagen production and integrity, resulting in loss of elasticity and, ultimately, aging skin. Although this is a natural and unavoidable by-product of metabolism, an overabundance of free radical damage can cause premature aging and wrinkles. Fortunately, there's a nutritional way to fight the elements.

Coenzyme Q10, also called CoQ10 and ubiquinone, is a fat soluble, vitamin-like nutrient present in virtually all cells and considered the

spark plug of the body, helping to produce and regulate energy as well as fighting free radicals as an antioxidant.

CoQ10 levels are highest during the first 20 years of life and decline with time, so much so that at age 80, CoQ10 levels may be lower than at birth. Yet the body's demand for CoQ10 increases with age. Furthermore, statin (cholesterol-lowering) medications can further deplete the body of CoQ10.

The recommended daily CoQ10 dose is 30 mg, in combination with alpha lipoic acid and vitamins A, C, E, and selenium. Foods highest in CoQ10 include sardines, beef, peanuts, spinach, and albacore tuna. However, it would take a pound of sardines, two

pounds of beef, or two-and-a-half pounds of peanuts to provide 30 mg, and cooking foods at high temperatures degrades the enzyme. Consequently, CoQ10 supplementation is likely necessary to achieve therapeutic effects.

CoQ10 can also benefit topically, as it's a small molecule that can easily penetrate the skin. When CoQ10 is combined with vitamins C and E in creams or lotions, the synergistic effect can neutralize free radicals, thus reducing wrinkles.

Supplementing with CoQ10 is not only a good antiaging strategy for the skin, it can also enhance energy, cognition, heart health, stroke prevention, and immune support.

*It is the spirit
that creates the
body.*

-Goethe

The sky is falling. Everytime we turn on the TV, radio or open a newspaper it seems we are bombarded with doom and gloom. While much of what is happening seems out of our control, how we handle the stress of the worlds' woes and our own individual troubles is within our control. Taking even a few small steps on a regular basis can be beneficial to both our mental and physical well being. Here are a few to try:

- 1) Exercise 4-5 times a week, pick one you enjoy.
- 2) Petting and playing with pets
- 3) Socializing with friends
- 4) Reducing alcohol, caffeine and sugar intake.
- 5) Media free day! Go one day a week without reading a newspaper, magazine, the internet, or e-mail and don't watch television or listen to the radio.
- 6) Prayer and meditation, even a few minutes helps.
- 7) Finally get a massage at least once a month, even a 30 minute massage can help with muscle tension and reduce stress.

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