

Deb's Massage Therapy Newsletter

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Back Pain and Massage

How Bodywork Can Help

Karrie Osborn

Whether it's a pulled muscle from yoga class or an afternoon basketball game, or a long-term pain caused by injury, most of us will come to know the beast that is called back pain. In fact, when it comes to low-back pain specifically, researchers say that 70-85 percent of the population will experience it at some point in their lives.

Causes of Pain

Experts say the cause of back pain can be the result of several factors. High on the list is stress. When our body is stressed, we literally begin to pull inward: the shoulders roll forward and move up to the ears, the neck disappears, and the back tightens in the new posture. "It's an

ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more can contribute to pain.

Geoffrey Bishop, owner of Stay Tuned Therapeutics in Flagstaff, Arizona, says mechanics is the main cause of back pain that he sees in his practice. "It's mechanics, including repetitive use and ignorance about preventative postures, and neglect by employers and employees to provide rest and recovery." The past also plays a part, he says. "Old injuries and traumatic events, left untreated and unresolved, seem to dictate where stress lands in the back as well."

*Tension is who
you think you
should be.
Relaxation is
who you are.*
-Chinese Proverb



Studies show that massage therapy helps reduce back pain more than some medications.

armoring effect," says Angie Parris-Raney, a Denver-based massage therapist who specializes in deep-tissue massage and sports therapy. "That protective mode, with the muscles in flex, can even result in visceral problems," she says, where the pain also affects internal organs.

In addition to stress, poor posture, bad

Massage Offers Hope

Those who suffer with back pain know there are no easy answers for chasing the pain away. Physical therapy has proven effective for some sufferers, as has chiropractic and acupuncture, but massage therapy is also making a name

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Office Hours and Contact

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At Ault's-M/W/Th/Sa 859-907-6417

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-4:30P 812-614-4705-other hrs. poss.

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for itself when it comes to providing relief. In fact, research has shown that massage can be a great friend to the back-pain sufferer.

"Massage therapists have long treated low-back pain safely and effectively," says Les Sweeney, president of Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals. "They have done so less expensively and less invasively than is possible with other treatments."

In fact, a study by the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle found that massage was more effective at treating low-back pain than medication. Patients who received massage once a week for 10 weeks were more likely to report that their back pain had improved, and improvements were still present six months after the study. Other research from the University of Miami School of Medicine and the Touch Research Institute showed that massage can decrease stress and long-term pain, improve sleep and range of motion, and help lower the incidence of depression and anxiety that often accompanies back pain.

For Parris-Raney's clients, the length of pain relief provided by massage therapy varies depending on the condition they are experiencing. Getting on a regular massage schedule, however, has really helped her clients manage the back pain, she says. When they go past their normally scheduled appointment, "their bodies know it's time to get a massage again." Whether it's just helping clients get through the day, or reminding the stressed-out office worker to breathe, Parris-Raney says massage can play an important part in back pain relief.

Whitney Lowe, owner of Oregon's Orthopedic Massage Education and Research Institute, says the benefits of massage for back pain depend on the primary cause of the pain. "If it is predominantly muscular pain, then massage has a great deal to offer in reducing pain associated with chronic muscle tightness, spasms, myofascial trigger points, or those types of problems. If it's something caused by a joint alignment problem or compression on a nerve, for example, then the role of massage might be somewhat different, such as helping to address the biomechanical dysfunctions,

but not really being able to get pressure off the nerve itself."

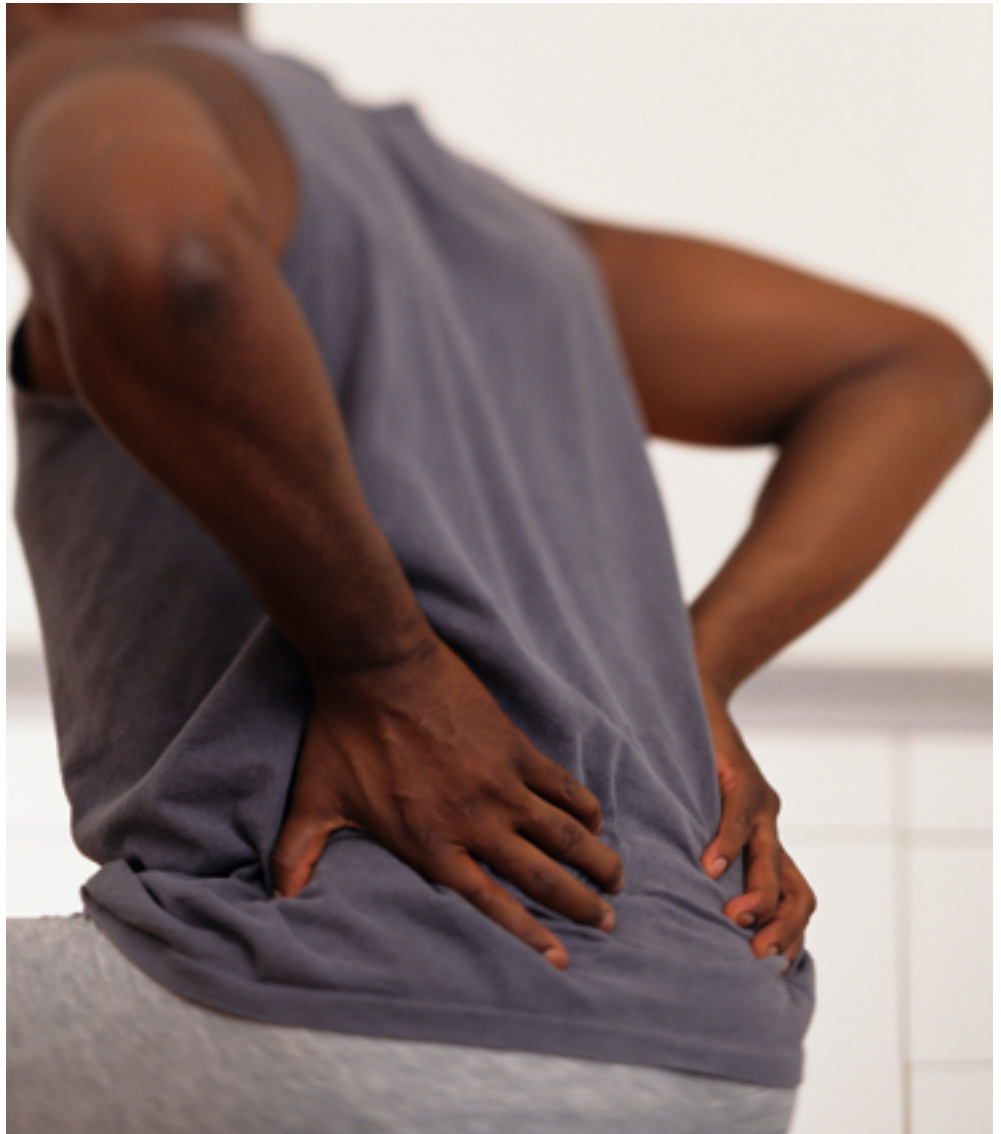
Massage Works

When it comes to back pain, there are a lot of options out there. Ultimately, massage, and its myriad benefits, might be a viable answer. For back pain sufferers, Parris-Raney says massage can work wonders. "Massage can help relax the body, relax the psyche, and improve a client's range of motion and circulation to the affected tissues," she says. Not only can massage help directly with the pain, but it can also make life a little easier, too. "Massage lets you tap into the parasympathetic system," she says, "and tap into all the good hormones that help you sleep better and help you handle stressors along the way." All of that helps in building a healthier back and a happier you.

Benefits of Massage

From stress relief to skin rejuvenation, the benefits of massage are extensive. When it comes to managing back pain, however, there are some specific benefits touch therapy can offer:

- Improved circulation. With increased circulation comes faster recovery time for sore, overworked muscle tissues.
- Increased release of endorphins. The prevalence of these natural painkillers is boosted every time you have a massage. This can only help in managing pain.
- Improved movement. Range of motion and flexibility both get a boost with massage.
- Increased relaxation. When you relax, your muscles relax, thereby calming the pain.



Be sure to communicate with your massage therapist if you are experiencing back pain.

Be Smart with Smartphones

Tips for Avoiding Injury

Have you ever noticed that your neck gets cranky after an extended Angry Birds binge? Or your thumb starts to throb the day after sending 40 emails from your phone during a particularly boring meeting? With more people spending more time on their smartphones, stories of repetitive strain injuries like these are on the rise.

Certified Hellerwork practitioner and licensed massage therapist Joseph Hunton has seen, and experienced, the results of overuse and improper ergonomics when it comes to these devices. "I had been sitting and standing with my head bent over the phone while holding it and making fine finger movements for hours at a time," Hunton says of the days that followed the arrival of his new smartphone. "This was a recipe for strain and pain."

Being Smart

Hunton encourages smartphone users to stretch and take frequent breaks, and cautions that improper use may result in a stiff neck, sore upper back, and tight

arms. Here are some more smartphone ergonomic tips to avoid the pain:

- Bring the phone up to your line of sight to keep your head aligned with your spine.
- Use a wireless headset to prevent arm strain.
- Never hold the phone between your head and shoulder.

Frequent smartphone use can also cause repetitive strain injuries of the thumb. Hunton reminds us to use our smartphones intelligently. "Although it can perform many functions, it is not really a computer, gaming station, or video monitor," he says.

Options for Relief

Stretching, limiting your smartphone use, and receiving frequent massage are all successful ways to alleviate the strain caused by repetitive use. Listen to your body, and communicate with your massage therapist about any pain or discomfort that might arise from the use of these devices.



Follow these guidelines to stay pain-free.

Nuts Help Control Diabetes

The Benefits of a Healthier Diet

If you're a diabetic, or are otherwise concerned about your glucose levels, a new study has some potentially life-saving news for you. Researchers have found that replacing carbohydrates with just two ounces of nuts on a daily basis significantly improved glycemic control and reduced LDL cholesterol for patients with type 2 diabetes.

The study was published in the August issue of Diabetes Care and features the work of David Jenkins, MD, PhD, DSc, who says that, "Nuts, including peanuts, can make a valuable contribution to the diabetic diet by displacing high glycemic index carbohydrates and replacing them with vegetable fats and vegetable proteins which have been shown in the long term to be associated with better

cardiovascular health and diabetes prevention."

Why so good?

One of the qualities of nuts that the study gives as a potential cause of this benefit is that they are a source of mono- and polyunsaturated oils--fatty acids that are healthier than saturated fats. In addition, they report that the high amount of protein found in nuts helps reduce hunger by increasing the length of time that one feels full.

Making the change

One thing to consider when seeking to implement this change in your diet is the increasing prevalence of peanut and other tree nut allergies. A 1999 study by

the National Institute of Health (NIH) estimated that approximately 1.1 percent of the population, or some 3 million Americans, are affected by this allergy, which can cause hives, throat tightness, wheezing, vomiting, and other serious side effects.

On the other hand, the NIH reports that over 18 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes and estimates that there are an additional 7 million who have not been diagnosed. If consuming two ounces of nuts a day can significantly improve aspects of this condition, which is associated with blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, limb amputation, stroke, and death, it would appear to be a smart move to make.

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

-Etty Hillesum

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Other hours are possible for Medicine Hands Massage than those listed on newsletter. Call to ask.

WHY "MEDICINE HANDS" MASSAGE THERAPY?

The business that I own- Medicine Hands Massage Therapy- is called that for a particular reason. "Medicine" in Native American spirituality denotes that which creates a sense of connectedness and frequently resides in Nature. Anything that gives you a feeling of being connected to Something Larger than yourself, such as hearing the ocean or seeing a beautiful sunset or hearing inspirational music, is medicine. My ardent desire is that my hands and heart will be medicine to you via the gifts of massage and healing energy.

Med. Hnds/D. Vierling, CMT->Ault/Miladys

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