



Staying in Touch®

How have you been doing?

The more you understand about the basic workings of your body, the more you should appreciate how beneficial massage therapy is to your overall health. It's nice to know that such a relaxing treatment can help your body to function at its best.

The main article in this issue is a good example of how massage can help your body to function better. See if this information applies to you.

What will we learn in the future about improving our health? No doubt, there will be some fascinating discoveries. When you consider that virtually every study done so far on the potential benefits of massage has shown positive results, it makes sense that future studies will reveal more health benefits derived from receiving regular massage.

Remember, if you are interested in doing your own research into the roughly 100 clinical studies done on massage by the Touch Research Institute, you can find them online at: www.miami.edu/touch-research

Take good care of yourself. See you soon!

Why Do My Muscles Stay So Tight?

Do you have certain muscles that are always tight? Have you ever wondered why? It's easy to assign this condition to ongoing stress, especially in your neck and shoulders. But, what is the cause of chronic tense muscles ... and what can be done about it?

To understand this condition, we need to take a look at *muscle memory*, known scientifically as *proprioception*. This is the term for the interaction that occurs between your brain and nervous system. *Proprioceptors* are the nerve endings that tell your brain where your hands, fingers, legs, feet and toes are at any given moment. If you can picture someone playing the piano or typing without looking at their hands, you've got a good idea of how these nerve endings work. It takes lots of practice before these movements become a part of your muscle memory, but once learned, these types of tasks can be performed with little conscious thought.

So, what does this have to do with tight muscles? Let's take a look at repetitive use of your muscles as an example. Cyclists and runners use the same leg muscles repeatedly—just as weight lifters and even typists can overuse the muscles in their arms—resulting in chronically tight muscles.

The problem is that your body now loses its proper muscle memory. In other words, the muscle no longer remembers to return to its natural, relaxed and elongated state. Now the brain thinks holding your muscles

in this tight position is proper, even when you feel relaxed.

How can massage help relieve these chronically tight muscles? In his article*, *Muscle Memory*, injury-and-rehabilitation therapist Michael Young says, "Circulation is the key to all healing. The

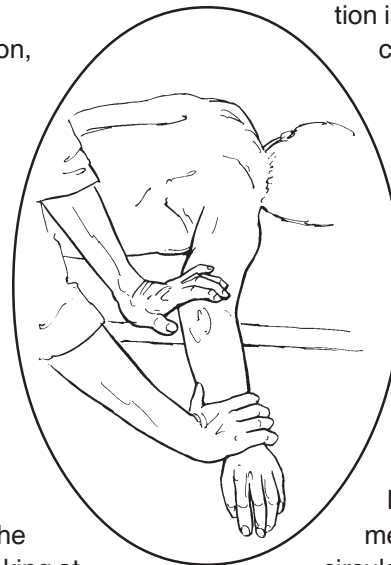
circulatory system has been referred to as the river of life. No healing will ever take place without blood flow. The blood brings oxygen, minerals, nutrients and vitamins to the entire body.

"The blood also removes toxins from the body. Veins travel through every muscle. When a muscle becomes tight, muscle memory is lost and the circulation to that area of the body

is hindered, resulting in inflammation. Nerves also travel through every muscle, and when a muscle tightens, the nerves can become entrapped, resulting in pain. During injury, the muscles in the area contract to help protect it. The longer the muscle remains tight, the more ingrained it becomes in the muscle memory. Scar tissue forms in the soft tissues after injuries or invasive surgeries. That scar tissue is resilient, and holds the muscle even tighter, adding to the loss of muscle memory."

The good news is that combining massage with stretches of short duration can help muscles regain their proper muscle memory and bring relief to these areas. Be sure to ask at your next session if you are bothered by chronically tight muscles.

* from *Massage Magazine*, Issue 127



Consumers' Use of Massage on the Rise

A survey of U.S. consumers about their massage use shows that 25 million more Americans each year are getting a massage today than they did 10 years ago, with 39 million American adults—more than one out of every six—getting massage annually. Older baby boomers (ages 55 to 64), in particular, have tripled their use of massage over the past 10 years, as have those ages 65 and older.



- While physicians led the way for recommending massage therapy when asked (59 percent), nearly half of all chiropractors (48 percent) and physical therapists (47 percent) also recommended massage when patients inquired.

- Seventy-nine percent of 25- to 35-year-olds would like to have their health-insurance plan cover massage, the highest percentage among age groups; 63 percent of Americans would be more inclined to try massage therapy if it was offered in conjunction with other health-care treatments.

- While relaxation (26 percent) is still a motive for Americans integrating

massage into their routines, using massage therapy for medical purposes (30 percent) such as injury recovery, pain reduction, headache control, and for their overall health and wellness, is even more prevalent.

- Use of massage per year at least doubled in all regions: the Northeast up from 9 percent to 18 percent; the South up from 7 percent to 16 percent; and the West up from 11 percent to 19 percent.

The survey was the 10th annual massage-therapy survey of American consumers conducted for the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), with results released in late October.

Also among the survey results:

- With the growth in popularity and use of massage therapy, more people are discussing it with their doctors and health-care providers. Nine million more people discussed massage therapy with their doctor or health-care provider this year than five years ago.

- More health-care professionals are recommending massage therapy as part of a patient's overall health: Almost twice as many doctors recommended it to their patients this year than five years ago, among those who discussed massage therapy with their doctors.

Front-page graphic from the MediClip Manual Medicine Collection, Williams & Wilkins, A Waverly Company

Looking for a special gift for someone?

How about a gift certificate for massage?

Show them just how special they are!

**Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery
you miss by going too fast—you also miss the
sense of where you are going and why.**

—Eddie Cantor

The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.
