

# Growing Body Of Research Shows Massage Therapy Effective For Prevalent Health Conditions

## **American Massage Therapy Association**

A growing body of evidence shows massage therapy can be effective for a variety of prevalent health conditions, including the pain of osteoarthritis of the knee, inflammation after exercise, chronic low back pain and fibromyalgia. Massage is rapidly becoming recognized as an important part of health and wellness, and research compiled by the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) indicates some of what takes place in the body during massage therapy.

The pain of osteoarthritis of the knee:

Research supported by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine shows 60-minute sessions of Swedish massage once a week for those with osteoarthritis of the knee significantly reduced their pain. This study, which involved a total group of 125 subjects over an eight-week period, is the latest published research study indicating the benefits of massage therapy for those with osteoarthritis of the knee.

Inflammation after exercise:

Research through the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and McMaster University in Hamilton, Ohio indicates massage therapy reduces inflammation of skeletal muscle acutely damaged through exercise. The study provides evidence for the benefits of massage therapy for those with musculoskeletal injuries and potentially for those with inflammatory disease. Specifically, evidence at the cellular level showed massage therapy may affect inflammation in a way similar to anti-inflammatory medications.

"This is a new type of research, which can lead to more information on how massage affects muscle," said AMTA President Cynthia Ribeiro. "We encourage more research on the benefits of massage therapy and how and why massage produces the benefits indicated by research."

Chronic low-back pain:

Research published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* expanded on previous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of massage therapy for chronic low back pain. "This is the latest step in understanding the positive outcomes for reducing chronic low back pain with massage,"

said Ribeiro.

Researchers found patients receiving massage were twice as likely as those receiving usual care to report significant improvements in both their pain and function. Massage patients also said they reduced the amount of over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications they took. The study, which took place over 10 weeks, compared both relaxation massage and "structural massage" therapy and found no difference in the results from the type of massage given.

Fibromyalgia:

Research published in the international journal Evidence Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine demonstrated massage-myofascial release techniques improved the response to pain and the quality of life in patients with fibromyalgia. This latest study shows real promise in understanding the effects of massage therapy to relieve symptoms of fibromyalgia. Specifically, the study found reductions in sensitivity to pain at tender points in patients. The research also found that immediately after treatment and one month after the massage program, anxiety levels, quality of sleep, pain and quality of life were still improved.