

# Therapies: For Arthritis of the Knee, Massage May Help

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**By Eric Nagourney**

**The full study, “Massage Therapy for Osteoarthritis of the Knee  
A Randomized Controlled Trial,” was published in  
the Archives of Internal Medicine  
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People who suffer from arthritis of the knee appear to gain lasting relief from a traditional course of Swedish massage, researchers report.

The findings suggest that doctors may want to advise arthritis patients to add massage to the treatments they are already using, like anti-inflammatory drugs. Massage may even be able to take the place of drugs for people who have mild arthritis or whose health does not allow them to take the medications.

The study, led by Dr. Adam J. Perlman of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, appears in the current Archives of Internal Medicine. The researchers said it was not clear how massage, which generally focuses on the muscles, helps people with a disease that affects joint tissues and bones. “We’re really thinking there are a couple of things going on,” said the senior author of the study, Dr. David L. Katz of the Yale University School of Medicine.

Part of the benefit may come from attracting more blood to the knee, Dr. Katz said. Massage may also reduce pain in the same way rubbing injured areas often does, by sending out sensory stimuli that compete with the pain stimuli.

Massage also seems to make arthritic knees more limber, encouraging patients to walk more, in itself a treatment for the disease.

For the study, the researchers used massage therapy on 68 patients with knee arthritis twice a week for four weeks and then once a week for four more. At the end, the patients demonstrated less pain and stiffness and better knee function. Eight weeks later, they continued to show a benefit.