

Massage Therapy for Parkinson's Disease Symptoms

**Natural Standard
March 20th, 2012**

**The full study, “Effects of traditional Japanese massage therapy on various symptoms in patients with Parkinson's disease: a case-series study,” was published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine March 18th, 2012
By Donoyama, N. and Ohkoshi, N.**

Massage therapy may improve symptoms of Parkinson's disease, according to a new study.

Massage is a broad term encompassing a variety of approaches to the manipulation of soft tissue to achieve health benefits. Massage techniques have been practiced for thousands of years in many cultures. Practitioners primarily use their hands but may also use their forearms, elbows or even their feet in some methods. Lubricants are often added to reduce friction and discomfort during the application of massage techniques. Early scientific evidence suggests that people with Parkinson's disease might have reduced symptoms after massage. More studies are needed.

In a new study, ten patients with Parkinson's disease were assigned to receive a 30-minute session of traditional Japanese massage in combination with standard medications. Various outcome measures, including walking speed, range of shoulder motion, muscle pain and fatigue were evaluated before and after treatment.

The researchers found that walking speed, shoulder stiffness and the severity of other symptoms all improved after massage therapy. The authors concluded that massage therapy in combination with conventional medications may benefit Parkinson's disease patients. However, larger-scale well-designed studies are necessary before firm conclusions can be made.

In addition to massage therapy, several other integrative therapies have been evaluated for their potential effects on Parkinson's disease symptoms. Parkinson's patients have shown modest improvement in symptoms following music therapy, including in some aspects of motor coordination, speech intelligibility and vocal intensity, bradykinesia (slow movement), emotional functions, activities of daily living and quality of life.