

Modern MASSAGE treatments

By Jacky Runice

Massage relieves pain, relaxes a heavy mind and heart, increases serotonin so you feel happier and snappier. A great massage therapist brings comfort and has a sixth sense about what's bothering you.

It's not just the intangibles and warm fuzzies that get folks hooked on massage, either. According to the American Massage Therapy Association, massage has been shown to address serious health issues by relieving symptoms such as back pain (at least 100 million Americans suffer from lower-back pain), migraine headaches, high blood pressure and carpal tunnel.

Dr. Susan J. Rychlik of Woodstock has been way ahead of the curve, suggesting massage to patients for more than 15 years. "Not only does massage improve overall well-being; it's highly recommended for cleansing and can release old pains and patterns. It's good for chronic fatigue and restless leg syndromes, fibromyalgia, depression/anxiety, hypertension and arthritis."

Swedish massage

The most common type of massage, Swedish massage uses long, flowing strokes and gentle kneading pressure to help increase circulation, ease pain and muscle tension, enhance flexibility and generate relaxation. Developed by a Swedish physiologist around 1812, Swedish massage is the groundwork for other Western massage therapies such as deep tissue and sports. If you're a "newbie" and aren't suffering from specific aches and pains, this is a good way to start.

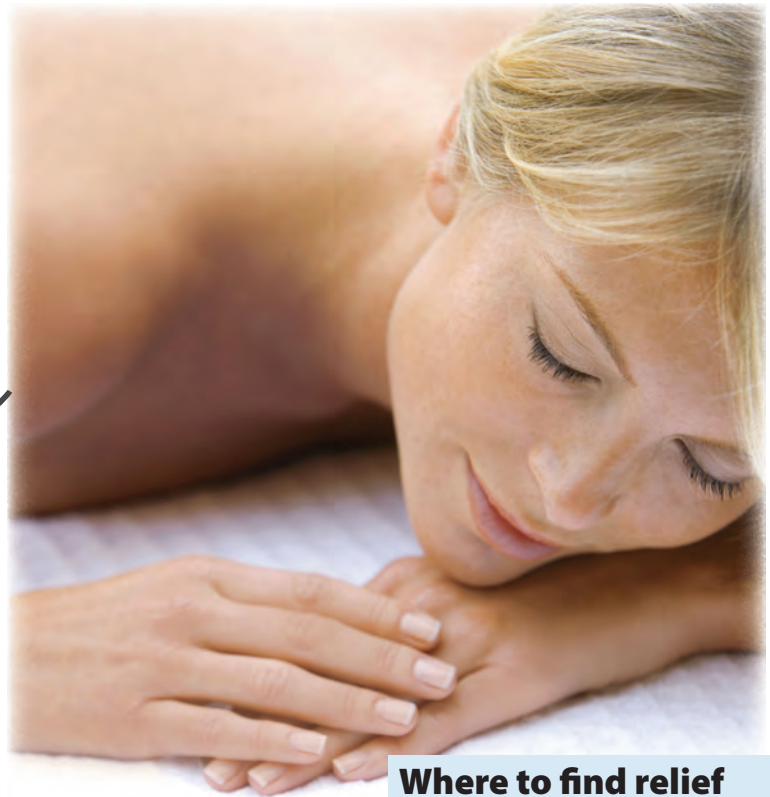
Deep tissue massage

Whereas people used to get a massage just for the relaxation, the 21st century nation wants healing, conditioning and relief — enter deep tissue massage that can alleviate a ton of tension with its slower, stronger strokes that work deeper into muscles, tendons and fascia. It can be a "no pain, no gain" kind of experience with some mild discomfort during the massage as kinks are worked out. Don't be surprised by a day or two of soreness after, but you should be moving more freely, too.

Head-to-toe relaxation

Try any of the dozen or so Mario Tricoci Hair Salons & Day Spas that offer massage services. The spa's Signature Massage offers the best of both the Swedish and deep tissue worlds: it's designed for head-to-toe relaxation through traditional pressure points, including scalp, hands, and feet, plus warm herbal pillows and a lavender-infused foot wrap that melts away stress and tension. You'll get a full body massage, too.

Communication is essential to get the most of your time and money, said Cassandra Stratton, a licensed massage therapist and a corporate massage trainer for Tricoci. "Share and discuss your goals for the massage and technique preferences (stretching, firm/soft pressure, scalp work) and feel free to offer feedback during and after the session."



Where to find relief

Midtown Athletic Club

2211 Waukegan Road, Bannockburn
(847) 236-1907
midtownclubs.com

endulge Day Spa and Boutique

5572 Grand Ave, Gurnee
(847) 599-5100
endulgeonline.com

Tranquility Skin & Body Care Center

113 N. Second Ave., St. Charles
(630) 762-9864
relaxattranquility.com.

The Spa at Trump Chicago

401 N Wabash Ave., Chicago
(312) 588-8020
trumpchicagohotel.com

Mario Tricoci Hair Salon & Day Spa

Many suburban locations
tricoci.com

Peninsula Spa

108 E Superior St., Chicago
(312) 337-2888.
peninsula.com

Sports massage

You needn't be an Olympic athlete, a college running back or a tennis pro to get benefits from a sports massage. If you've developed a bum knee from running, a frozen shoulder from your golf swing or shin splints from testing out your kids' trampoline, this kind of massage can help to heal the body. If you're training for a walking or running event, look into a restorative sports massage done during training to allow you to train harder and with less injury.

Banish aches and pains

How about a spa right inside of a health club such as Bannockburn's Midtown Athletic Club? "We have members that come to us with certain aches and pains, such as lower back, and massage improves circulation to troubled areas and promotes a general sense of well-being," said Lorena M. Perez, spa director at the club. You need not be a member of the club to book and enjoy massage or any other spa treatments.

Asian body work

The core of Asian body work is monitoring and modulating the flow of the chi — life energy — by using physical pressure and manipulation to achieve a state of balance. Popular modalities include shiatsu, Thai massage and Tui Na. Shiatsu, which is essentially acupressure, is a Japanese method of applying finger pressure to precise points that lie along specific meridians.

Tui Na, a Chinese technique, adds to that by stimulating acupuncture points by brushing, kneading, rolling and pressing the soft tissue between joints. If you're familiar with massage, you'll notice the difference during Tui Na as the therapist manipulates areas to realign the musculoskeleton and ligaments.

You might like the fact that Thai Massage, a technique in which the therapist uses his or her body to move you into a series of poses, is done fully clothed. You'll undergo muscle compression, joint mobilization and acupressure and feel longer, leaner and more flexible.



A Thai massage, offered by Tranquility Skin & Body Care Center includes yoga stretching and acupressure.

Stretch and relax

A luxury day spa and fashion boutique in Gurnee, indulge Day Spa and Boutique offers a variety of familiar massage modalities and specialty services, including Tui Nai, with ultra experienced therapists. Owner Angela Robinson has combined a beautiful space with upscale product lines, handbags and unique clothing. The spa was featured in the February, 2009 issue of Lucky Magazine as one of only four of Chicago's Best Mini Spa Getaways. The spa also offers "Elements Massage" during which you experience deep tissue, Swedish, reflexology, aromatherapy and heated stone massage therapies to discover what works for you.

Book a Thai Massage at St. Charles' Tranquility Skin & Body Care Center. The deep full body treatment includes yoga stretching of the joints and muscles and acupressure compression applied with hands, elbows, knees and feet. Choose a 90-minute to 2.5 hour experience.

Head and shoulders, hands and toes

The High Tech Nation, with its Blackberry thumbs and computer hunchbacks have opened a whole new area of massage to battle modern ills. Some of the most fashionable Chicago hotels are designing massage therapies for pain relief and relaxation.

The Spa at Trump Chicago offers treatments exclusive to Chicago called Ultimate Urban Treatments — and are they powerful. During the Ultimate Urban Neck & Shoulder Massage, the therapist alternates compression and acupressure massage with hot and cold volcanic rocks to heal muscles and joints aching from overuse, bad sleeping postures and too much computer work.

Ultimate Urban Hand Relief liberates stiffness and releases tension in the muscles and joints of the hands, arms, neck and shoulders through various massage techniques, stretches and hot and cold volcanic stones.

The treatment "Ceremonies" at the Peninsula Spa are outstanding and intricate, fusing European, Asian and Ayurvedic concepts and a two-hour Jade Hot Stone Massage.

Whether it's too much standing, walking or socializing in your Manolo Blahniks, your feet will feel like a kid's again after the Simply Peninsula Foot Treatment. You'll get rid of winter skin with a deep exfoliation of your feet and lower

Save on massage

Massage can get pretty pricey, so subscribe to PrettyCity.com, a beauty and wellness Web site that will save you money on services.

During February, for example, PrettyCity.com partners with The Heart Truth, a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease, and top spas, salons, medspas and wellness destinations in Chicago and the suburbs to present "Love You." It's a month-long beauty bonanza featuring discounted treatments at top beauty and wellness destinations for just \$59 in February, National Heart Month.

For a full list of more than 100 participating salons and spas across the nation and their offers, visit prettycity.com/love. Other specials and promotions can be delivered to your e-mail address when you sign up.

legs using energizing marine salts that hydrate and rebalance. Iced and heated compresses help to reduce lymph fluid that can result in swollen feet and ankles, then it's a refreshing massage followed by a detoxifying mask.

Try a face massage

If you get a foot massage, why not your face? A Flax-C Anti-Aging Facial by Bioelements includes a firming massage for the face.

"Blood is what nourishes your skin," explained Teresa Stenzel of Bioelements, "and the massage forces oxygen and nutrients to the skin, increasing circulation and helping feed the skin, regenerate itself and rid the skin of toxins." The massage that's part of a facial helps move lymphatic fluid through the system, relieving puffy eyes and strengthening the immune system.

"It's like taking your face to the health club," Stenzel added. The Bioelements Flax-C Anti-Aging Facial is available at both Zano Salons and Day Spas in Naperville (www.zanosalons.com) and Chicago's Spa Soak (www.spasoakchicago.com). For other locations and details on its product line, go to bioelements.com.

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