

YOUR HEALING KNEADS

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Age is a State of Mind

Baby Boomers Combat Aging with Bodywork

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, preventing disease and injury is critical to reducing the expected growth of health-care costs headed our way, as more than 70 million U.S. baby boomers cross the 60-year-old threshold. Moreover, disease prevention is critical to, well, your health!

Whether you're a boomer who is running a marathon or running after your grandchildren, you know that growing older doesn't mean growing old. If you're wondering how to stave off the effects of aging, the preventative and restorative nature of massage and bodywork might be just what the body ordered.

and its elasticity, and toning muscle tissue. Massage also creates a stimulating cellular function in the hypodermis, dermis, and epidermis layers of the skin and increases the production of skin-nurturing sebum.

Immunity and Stress

If you're already a frequent recipient of massage, you know what the work does to combat daily stress. But did you know how detrimental those stressors can be?

Experts say the majority of disease we encounter today is associated with stress. Not only that, stress is a huge factor in premature aging of the body. Researchers say chronic stress ages the

Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.

-Mother Teresa



Massage therapy can play an important role in aging well and remaining youthful and healthy.

Improved Circulation, Healthier Skin

As our bodies age, our circulation slows and our skin loses its once youthful vitality. Experts say the mechanical nature of massage combats these effects by increasing circulation through the manipulation of tissue, improving the appearance and condition of the skin

body, weakens immune cell function, and can make cells appear up to 17 years older than they really are. Through its effects, massage deftly attacks stress, while boosting the immune system. Massage encourages the release of oxytocin, a stress-reducing hormone in the body most often associated with

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birth and bonding, and activates the parasympathetic nervous system and its relaxation response. Massage also decreases beta brainwave activity, increases dopamine and serotonin levels in the body, and reduces cortisol levels, all of which are linked to decreased stress.

Squashing the Pain

Part of the aging process, unfortunately, involves dealing with aches and pains. You might find a day of gardening brings on back pain you never experienced before, or your biking regimen now requires greater recovery time afterward. Even though pain is a constant source of grief for an aging body, massage can make a difference.

The passive movement in massage keeps joints more mobile and stimulates the synovial fluid, which lubricates the joints and nourishes the articular cartilage. Massage also prompts the release of endorphins and other pain-reducing neurochemicals.

In addition to the pains of physical exertion an aging body experiences, the discomfort caused by arthritis can be just as debilitating. Experts predict that one-third of Americans will get arthritis as they age. Ironically, most arthritis sufferers may not think of massage when they start to explore which therapies might ease their pain. While it is doubtful an arthritic joint can "heal" completely with massage, it can feel better. And for an arthritis sufferer, better is a welcome word, particularly when there are no side effects involved.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, an increasing number of doctors are recommending massage to their arthritis patients to help relieve the pain and stiffness caused by their disease. Massage can increase circulation around painful joints, bringing healing oxygen and nutrients, including amino acids, to rebuild tissue. Many massage therapists report that their arthritic clients find better and longer-lasting relief from massage than from pharmaceuticals.

Whether its reducing the symptoms of arthritis, or simply addressing the aches and pains of living an active life, massage can play an important role in aging well.

Bennies for Boomers

The benefits from massage and bodywork can help bodies of all ages, especially for baby boomers. Research has shown that massage:

- Improves range of motion and decreases low-back pain.
- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles.
- Reduces swelling and scar tissue.
- Reduces recovery time from injury/surgery.
- Reduces stress, a major contributor to disease and ill health.
- Releases endorphins, the body's natural painkiller, thereby reducing the need for medications.
- Stimulates lymph flow and supports the body's natural process of detoxification.

Psychological Value

In addition to all the physical benefits massage and bodywork offers, there also are proven psychological changes we experience with massage. One of the reasons massage feels so relaxing is that there is a literal psychological benefit as dopamine and serotonin become balanced in the system. And when massage produces oxytocin in the body, there is a sense of being nurtured. Add that to the restorative effect that comes from those quiet moments during massage, and you've got a process that experts say is incredibly healing.

Aging, obviously, is a process none of us can avoid. As Benjamin Franklin said, "When you're finished changing, you're finished." Turn the inevitability of aging into a positive process of change and let massage and bodywork help you along the journey.



The aches and pains that often accompany the aging process can be managed with bodywork.

Relief for Computer Users

Mary Betts Sinclair

According to the American Optometric Association, 46 percent of Americans spend at least five hours a day on a computer or smartphone. When looking at a screen, many people hold their head forward of center and slouch, which puts many upper-body muscles in a shortened position.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO AVOID PAIN AND STRAIN:

Computer users tend to blink very little and stare straight ahead, not using their peripheral vision. Be sure to keep blinking, which washes your eyes in naturally therapeutic tears and breaks up your stare.

Take frequent rest breaks using the 20-20 Rule: every 20 minutes, spend 20 seconds looking at something far away, preferably gazing out a window. Also, stand up and move as much as possible. This is a great time to do eye-muscle stretches and range-of-motion exercises for your back and neck. Use your fingertips to gently

massage around your eyes, temples, and forehead. Finally, rub your palms together and gently cup your closed eyes. Relax and breathe freely.

Make sure you have good light, and check that your monitor is the correct distance away from your eyes and at the right height. Also, adjust the screen settings to where they are comfortable in terms of resolution and flicker.

If you wear eyeglasses, have them checked. For example, in order for some people to see clearly with their heads held in an upright and balanced position, and without chronic tightness in the back of the neck, they may need to have a prescription for a longer focal length or larger bifocal inserts, or have an adjustment of their eyeglass frames if they are bent or twisted. Some people may need a stronger or weaker prescription. If your doctor has prescribed a pair of glasses specifically for seeing the computer screen, wear them.

Mary Betts Sinclair is an Oregon-based educator and bodyworker. Learn more about her at www.marybettssinclair.com.



Take frequent breaks to avoid eye strain.

Healthy Grilling Tips

Summertime and grills go together like a hot dog and mustard. But could that hot dog actually be doing you harm? Alice Bender, registered dietician at the American Institute for Cancer, says that diets high in beef, pork, and lamb, as well as processed meats like hot dogs, are linked to an increased risk of colon cancer. She suggests that sticking with chicken and fish can "make this summer's backyard grilling both healthier and more flavorful." Use herbs and spices to amp up flavor, and try marinating for 30 minutes before you grill, which can reduce the amount of heterocyclic amines--the potentially cancer-causing compounds formed when grilling.

Here are some other tips to help reduce health risks associated with the grill:

TRIM THE FAT

Fat can increase smoke, which may contain carcinogens, so choose leaner meats and trim excess fat.

DON'T BURN IT

Charred, well-done meat can increase your risk of pancreatic cancer, according to a study from the University of Minnesota.

BUT COOK IT THROUGH

Make sure that you hit the USDA recommendations for internal temperature, which can be found at www.foodsafety.gov.

MORE VEGGIES!

Grilling vegetables does not create the same heterocyclic amines as grilling meats. Plus, veggies have less fat and cholesterol in general.

KEEP IT CLEAN

Don't let a charred mess build up on your grill, because it will eventually find its way onto your food.

*Trust yourself,
you know more
than you think
you do.*

-Benjamin Spock

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