

## *A Healing Touch Therapeutic Massage*

Everything you do can be done better from a place of relaxation.

-Stephen C. Paul

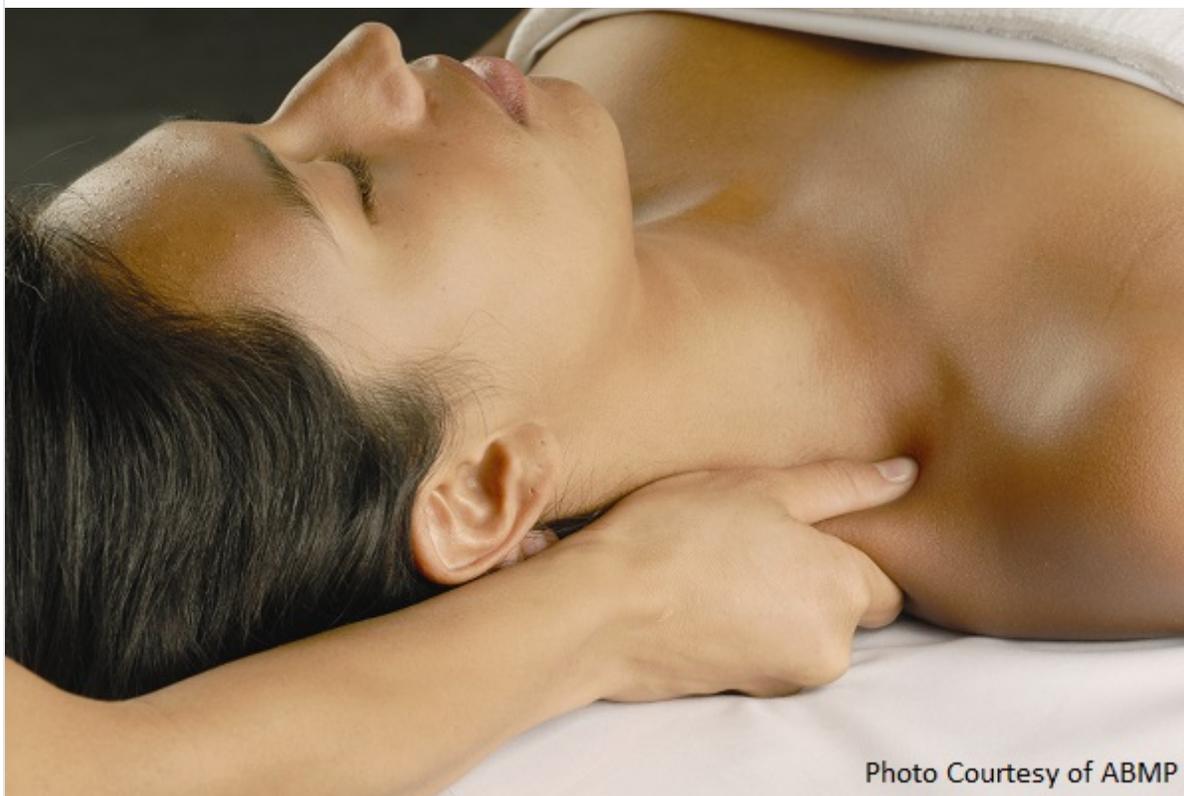


Photo Courtesy of ABMP

### **What Massage Can Do For You**

Beyond Pain Relief, Massage is Valuable for Preventive Care

Karrie Osborn

*This article first appeared in the Summer 2013 issue of Body Sense.*

Whether it is an aching back, recovery from an injury, a case of carpal tunnel syndrome, or a host of other debilitating physiological conditions, there's no doubt massage and bodywork works to relieve pain. But once your therapist has helped you tackle your pain, do you quit calling? When the pain is gone, are you gone, too?

Massage therapy is highly effective for pain relief, but it is an amazing preventive therapy as well. Massage helps build and maintain a healthy body (and mind), it combats stress, and it works to keep the immune system strong. In short, massage can keep on working for you, even after the pain is gone.

### **MASSAGE FOR WELLNESS**

If it's been a while since you booked your last massage--because your pain is no longer an issue or your injury is fully rehabbed--you might want to consider massage for preventive care.

Massage can play an important role in a good health-care regimen. Just as you eat healthily, exercise regularly, and take your vitamins to ward off illness and maintain a fit body, you should consider making frequent massage a part of your wellness lifestyle.

According to Benny Vaughn, a sports massage expert in Fort Worth, Texas, one of the benefits of consistent and regular massage therapy is better flexibility. "This happens because regular and structured touch stimulus enhances the nervous system's sensory and spatial processing capacity," he says. "That is, the person becomes more aware of her body's movement in space and becomes more aware of tightness or pain long before it reaches a critical point of mechanical dysfunction."

As a preventive measure, frequent massage puts you more in tune with your body. "The consistency of massage therapy over time creates a cumulative stress-reduction effect," Vaughn says. "The person becomes acutely aware of stress within her body long before it can create stress-driven damage."

And the more massage you receive, the more benefits you reap. "Massage therapists know that people who get massage regularly demonstrate greater improvement and notice a reduction in pain and muscular tension, as well as an improvement in posture," says Anne Williams, author of *Massage Mastery: From Student to Professional* (Lippincott Williams Wilkins, 2012).

"People regularly make a commitment to fitness," Williams says. "People regularly make a commitment to changing their diet. The difference they'd experience if they regularly made a commitment to massage is mind-blowing."

### **STRESS IS A KILLER**

Stress is more than just a word we throw around to describe the nature of our hectic day. Today, we understand that stress kills.

According to the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, 60-90 percent of all US medical visits are for stress-related disorders. Chronic pain, headaches, heart disease, hypertension, and ulcers can all be wrought from stress. Many would argue that the best benefit of massage is its ability to reduce the stress in our lives.

From the perspective of daily living, think about the stress you felt at today's meeting-- now it's hiding in your neck. Tomorrow that can turn into stiffness and eventually begin to affect other parts of your body. If you see your massage therapist for your regular session this week, the chances are good you won't reach the tipping point. Think of massage and bodywork as a way to rebalance your body.

Noted researcher Tiffany Field and her colleagues from the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine report that massage causes positive biological changes when it comes to stress. Through the course of more than 20 studies, these scientists found that massage decreases cortisol (a stress-derived hormone that negatively affects immune function and kills our immune cells) and increases dopamine and serotonin (the neurotransmitters most associated with emotional well-being).

Add to this the research that shows massage can lower your heart rate and decrease your blood pressure, and you have a mighty effective, nonpharmacological, stress-fighting tool that's about as natural as natural can get.

### **A ONE-HOUR VACATION AND SO MUCH MORE**

You may no longer need to rehab that knee or work the scar tissue from your surgery, but don't forget about everything else massage can do for you. Massage is the entire package, helping to heal body, mind, and spirit. Think of it as a one-hour vacation with amazing return on investment.

Whether it be maintaining joint flexibility, managing blood pressure, or enhancing immunity, massage works. From repair to relief and from recovery to relaxation, massage is a magnificent piece of natural medicine you should always have as part of your health-care routine.

*Karrie Osborn is senior editor for Body Sense. Contact her at [karrie@abmp.com](mailto:karrie@abmp.com).*

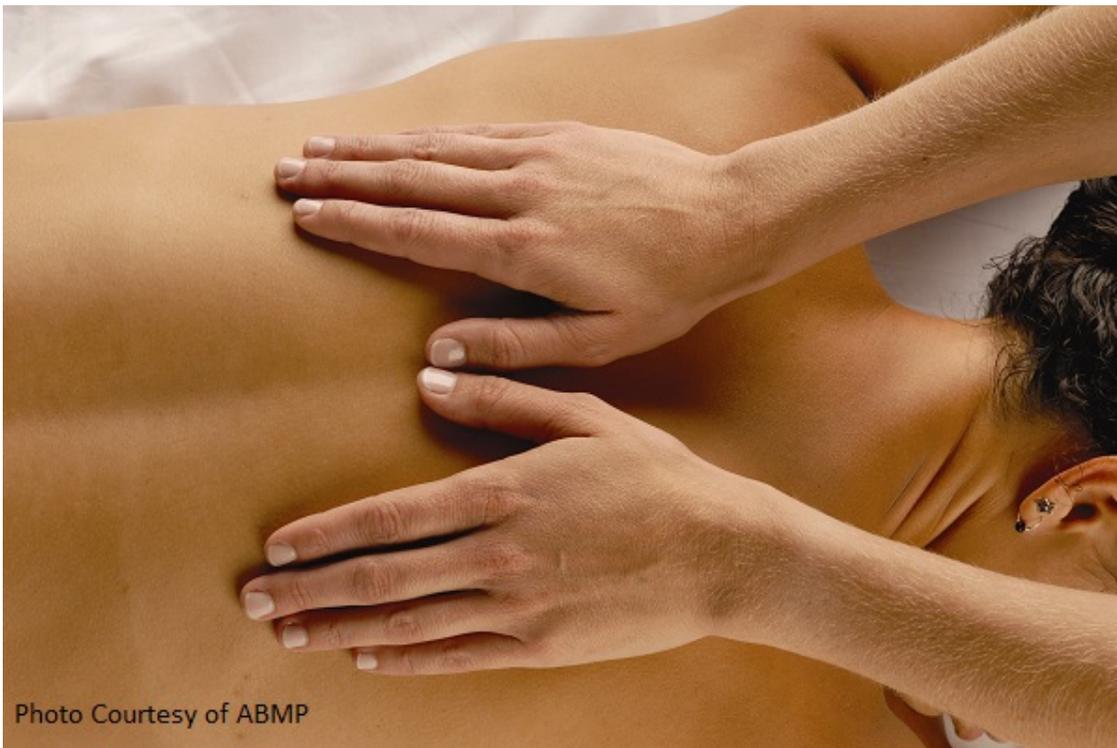


Photo Courtesy of ABMP

# Stay Hydrated

Jennie Hastings Stancu

Has your therapist told you about the importance of drinking water?

After all, our bodies are composed of approximately 60 percent water, and all of our bodily functions are sustained by water. Dehydration is one of the most common detriments to our health, and one of the easiest problems to fix. Make staying hydrated simple and seamlessly interwoven throughout your day.

## **START EACH DAY OFF RIGHT**

Start your morning with a tall, room-temperature glass of water with lemon squeezed into it, before you start taking any tea, coffee, or food. Front-loading hydration is helpful to the body. And be luxurious with your water--for a special treat, add mint, cucumber, or lemon.

## **HALF YOUR WEIGHT**

It is difficult to know how much water is enough. One rule of thumb is to take half your body weight in pounds, and drink that many ounces of water per day. So if you weigh 150 pounds, this would equal 75 ounces of water. For many of us, however, this might not be enough. If you are working hard, or you live in a particularly dry climate, you might need to drink even more than this.

## **WHAT ABOUT BPA?**

You've probably seen the phrase "BPA free" on water bottles, and you may want to gravitate toward these. BPA stands for bisphenol A, which is a chemical found in polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins.

According to [Mayoclinic.org](http://Mayoclinic.org), some research has shown BPA can seep from a container into foods and beverages, and this is concerning because of possible health effects BPA has on the brain and behavior. Look for non-plastic bottles, or look for the "BPA free" logo.

## **OTHER DRINKS**

Drinking herbal tea is a good way to stay hydrated. You can also augment your hydration with electrolyte-fortified water or sports drinks. However, be aware that a lot of these drinks have incredibly high levels of sugar in them. Hydration isn't a healthy habit if you drink a day's worth of sugar in every glass. So check the label before you buy.

Jennie Hastings Stancu is a licensed massage therapist and author.

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Photo Courtesy of ABMP

## **Flotation Tanks**

Brandon Twyford

If you want to take the concept of completely stopping even further, try totally unplugging from the noise of everyday life in a flotation tank.

Developed in 1954 to test the effects of sensory deprivation, the flotation tank is now used in a range of restorative and healing practices, including recovery from exercise or injury. It is also an effective tool for visualization techniques.

The tank contains water heated to the exact temperature of the skin--thereby removing

the sense of touch--and 800-1,000 pounds of Epsom salt for buoyancy. The result is a unique sensation that's completely unlike floating in a pool. It's more like floating in space. When we float in a normal pool, or even when we are asleep in bed, tiny muscles throughout our body are constantly working to adjust and support us. The flotation tank, however, allows you to completely let go.

I first experienced floating in 2006 on the recommendation of a friend. The idea sounded intriguing to me, so I decided to try it out by booking a session at my local yoga studio. I disrobed, put my earplugs in, and climbed into the tank. I laid back, stretched out, and closed my eyes.

Total isolation. The thoughts in my head, previously a subconscious presence of constant background noise, were suddenly deafening. I opened my eyes into pitch-black darkness. I was momentarily disoriented, and it took several minutes before I was able to consciously allow my body and mind to relax. As I did, I felt the dense water support every inch of my body.

At the end of the one-hour session, I was still discovering parts of my body where I had unconsciously been holding tension. The nape of my neck. My ankles. My ears. My hips. Places I hadn't even known I was using when my body was at rest. As I consciously let go of each of these body parts, I slipped further into a state of total physical relaxation. By the time I left the tank, my body felt more relaxed than it had in years.

Flotation tanks can be found in most cities, often as an auxiliary service at a yoga studio or wellness center, and an hour-long session runs about \$40-\$60. Until the average person can hitch a ride into space, this is as close as we'll get to experiencing total removal from the constant barrage of external stimuli on our overworked senses.

Lie back, close your eyes, and unplug.

*Brandon Twyford is assistant editor for Associated Bodywork Massage Professionals.*

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*Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others,  
cannot keep it from themselves.*

*-James M. Barrie*

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As school starts back up and routines fall back into place, remember to schedule time for yourself and book a relaxing massage and sauna session. Our lives are chaotic and stressful, so it is important to remember to take care of yourself physically and mentally. Detoxing with an infrared sauna session, healing your body with a massage, and allowing yourself to relax at home with ZUM aromatherapy products can make a major impact in your day. During the month of August, all ZUM bar soaps are **25% off!!!** Why would you not want to enjoy the soothing effects of aromatherapy every day. Pick up your favorite scent of ZUM soap Today!  
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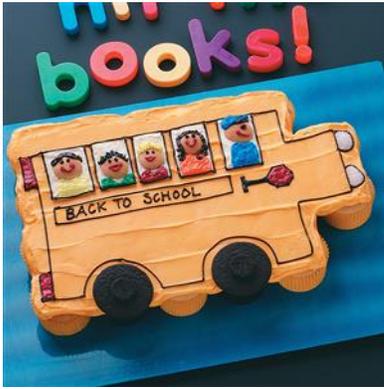
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These fun and adorable back-to-school cupcakes are fun for the entire family. They would also be a special treat for a class party. Follow the link below for this fun recipe!



## Recipe

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A HEALING TOUCH THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE  
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