



Massage Therapy Research Roundup, Volume 2

Everyone knows that a good massage can make you feel like a new person. And now, people of all ages are beginning to understand the many benefits of massage therapy, including the role it can play in overall health and well-being. Recent research suggests that massage can enhance the immune function in preterm infants, decrease blood pressure and improve stability in older persons, as well as reduce stress and anxiety in cancer patients.

Below are summaries of recent medical research about massage compiled by the **American Massage Therapy Association** which suggest that massage therapy can be an effective tool for a variety of health and medical conditions.

Massage Therapy for Improved Immune Function and Weight Gain in Preterm Infants

Research published in *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), showed that for stable, preterm infants, daily massage therapy is positively associated with higher natural killer (NK) cell cytotoxicity and weight gain. American Massage Therapy Association President, Cynthia Ribeiro, says of the study, "This research demonstrates that massage therapy can benefit preterm infants by enhancing immunity and stimulating growth. Parents of preterm infants are encouraged to speak with a certified massage therapist to learn more about certain techniques designed to aid in their child's development."

Ang J, Lua J, Mathur A, et al. A Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial of Massage Therapy on the Immune System of Preterm Infants. *Pediatrics*. 2012; 130(6):e1549-58.

Massage Therapy for Improvements in Balance, Neurological, and Cardiovascular Measure in Older Adults

Research published in the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (IJTMB)* found that older adults who receive massage therapy for up to six weeks could benefit from decreased blood pressure and improved stability. "This study suggests that regular massage therapy can produce several advantages for the older generation, including a relaxation effect for the entire body, lowering blood pressure, decreasing stress and improving balance, amongst other things," says American Massage Therapy Association President, Cynthia Ribeiro.

Sefton JM, Yarrar C, Berry JW, et al. Six weeks of massage therapy produces changes in balance, neurological and cardiovascular measures in older persons. *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork*. 2012; 5(3):28-40.

Massage Therapy for Decreasing Stress in Cancer Patients

Research published in *BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care* indicates that massage therapy can have a positive influence on the quality of life of people suffering serious illnesses such as brain cancer. The American Massage Therapy Association acknowledges these study results, which suggest that massage therapy can improve physical as well as emotional well-being in patients with late stage disease and when used in combination with standard care, massage can help reduce stress, anxiety, pain and fatigue.

Keir SM and Saling JR. Pilot study of the impact of massage therapy on sources and levels of distress in brain tumor patients. *BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care*. 2012;

How to Find a Professional Massage Therapist

Finding a professional massage therapist is vital to a positive massage experience. AMTA massage therapists have demonstrated a level of ability through education and/or testing, adhere to a code of ethics and must meet continuing education requirements. AMTA offers a free professional massage therapist locator service at findamassagetherapist.org.

AMTA Consumer Survey Facts

- 75% of individuals surveyed claim their primary reason for receiving a massage in the past 12 months was medical (43%) and stress (32%) related.
- 87% of individuals view massage as being beneficial to overall health and wellness
- 61% of respondents said their physician has recommended they get a massage.