

MASSAGE FOR IMPROVED MOOD + SLEEP

Whether it's the changing of the seasons or more long-term, chronic feelings of anxiety and depression, research indicates that massage therapy may help improve mood and reset circadian rhythms, which can lead to better sleep and more energy.



**Massage
therapy
boosts serotonin
levels, which helps
regulate mood,
appetite, sleep,
memory and
learning.**

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1

Improved Mood

THE RESEARCH. A randomized study of 34 women with stage 1 or 2 breast cancer investigated how massage therapy impacted depression and anxiety levels. The massage therapy group received a 30-minute massage three times per week for five weeks, which consisted of stroking, squeezing and stretching techniques to the head, arms, legs, feet and back. The control group received no intervention. Study participants were assessed on the first and last day of the study, and assessment included both immediate effects measures of anxiety, depressed mood and vigor, as well as longer-term effects on depression, anxiety and hostility, functioning, body image and coping styles. A subset of 27 women also had blood drawn to examine additional measures.

THE RESULTS. The immediate massage therapy effects included reduced anxiety, depressed mood and anger. Longer-term effects included reduced depression and hostility, as well as increased serotonin values, NK cell number and lymphocytes. Serotonin, a neurotransmitter with functions in various parts of the body, works to regulate mood, appetite, sleep, memory and learning.



2

Better Sleep

THE RESEARCH. In another study examining the effect of massage therapy on the adjustment of circadian rhythms in full-term infants, researchers measured the rest-activity cycles of infants before and after 14 days of massage therapy, starting at 10 days old and again at 6 and 8 weeks of age.

Rest-activity cycles were measured by actigraphy, and 6-sulphatoxymelatonin excretion was assessed in urine samples at 6 and 8 weeks of age. The concentration of 6-sulphatoxymelatonin in urine correlates well with the level of melatonin in the blood, and melatonin is what helps control sleep and wake cycles.

THE RESULTS. At 12 weeks, nocturnal 6-sulphatoxymelatonin excretions were significantly higher in the infants receiving massage therapy than those in the control group, suggesting that massage therapy can enhance coordination of the developing circadian system with environmental cues. ☉



AMTA RESOURCES

Looking for a massage therapist? Use our locator service: www.findamassage therapist.org.



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Learn more about the benefits offered by regular massage therapy by visiting the Research section of AMTA's website, where you'll find a wide variety of information on some of the latest research being done in the massage profession.

References

- Hernandezreif, M. 2004. Breast cancer patients have improved immune and neuroendocrine functions following massage therapy. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 45-52.
- Ferber, S., Laudon, M., Kuint, J., Weller, A., Zisapel, N. 2002. Massage therapy by mothers enhances the adjustment of circadian rhythms to the nocturnal period in full-term infants. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 410-415.

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