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STUDIES SUGGEST THE INCIDENCE OF OSTEOARTHRITIS WILL INCREASE BY **40 PERCENT** BY 2025.

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## EASING THE PAIN OF OSTEOARTHRITIS OF THE KNEE

There's been more than one study suggesting massage therapy helps relieve the pain associated with osteoarthritis of the knee. More recently, the results have again been affirmed by research supported by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

This 2012 study comprised 125 adult participants diagnosed with osteoarthritis of the knee. Participants were randomized to one of four, eight-week regimens, including 30- or 60-minute weekly or bi-weekly Swedish massage sessions or to a usual care control. For massage therapy participants, a manualized protocol specified the body regions to be addressed, as well as the Swedish strokes to be used, including effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, vibration, friction and skin rolling. Those in the usual care group continued with their current treatment without the addition of massage therapy. Outcomes included the Western Ontario and McMaster Universities Arthritis Index (WOMAC), visual analog pain scale, range of

motion, and time to walk 50 feet, assessed at baseline, eight, 16 and 24 weeks.

**The results.** At eight weeks, WOMAC scores improved significantly in the 60-minute massage groups compared to usual care, as did the visual analog pain scale. No significant differences were seen in range of motion. The study also suggests that these results are lasting. "All massage groups demonstrated significant improvement in WOMAC Global scores at 16 and 24 week timepoints compared to baseline, whereas those in the usual care group did not," the authors of the 2012 study reported. "The three highest doses of massage improved relative to baseline in WOMAC pain at 16 and 24 weeks, in stiffness at 24 weeks, and functionality at 16 and 24 weeks."

**Why it's important.** As the population ages, **studies suggest the incidence of osteoarthritis will increase by 40 percent by 2025.** Further, research has shown that conventional therapies are limited in effectiveness and toxicities associated with some drugs limit use, leaving surgery one of the main ways the symptoms of osteoarthritis are relieved.

This recent research, combined with a 2006 study that also showed massage therapy was effective in reducing pain associated with osteoarthritis, provides evidence that people with this condition might benefit from weekly, 60-minute massage therapy sessions.



## INFLAMMATION AFTER EXERCISE

Recent research through the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, indicates that massage therapy reduces inflammation of skeletal muscle acutely damaged through exercise. The study provides evidence for the benefits of massage therapy for those with musculoskeletal injuries and potentially for those with inflammatory disease, according to the lead author of the research.

The study found evidence at the cellular level that massage therapy may affect inflammation in a way similar to anti-inflammatory medications.