A growing body of research confirms the efficacy of massage for a variety of illnesses and ailments. Massage has been shown to reduce blood pressure and heart rate; increase cytotoxic capacity (activity level of the body’s natural “killer cells”) and decrease T-cells; enhance weight gain in pre-term infants; increase lymph flow and reduce edema; relieve and reduce certain types of back pain; and, reduce anxiety and relieve stress.

**Circulatory & Respiratory Systems**


   *Massage increases thoracic gas volume, peak flow and forced vital capacity.*


   *Massage reduces systolic and diastolic blood pressure.*


   *Massage reduces heart rate.*


   *Massage reduces blood pressure and heart rate.*

**Immune Function**


   *These three studies show that massage increases cytotoxic capacity (activity level of the body's natural “killer cells”) and decreases T-cells. The studies demonstrate consistent findings across different populations.*

**Infants and Children**


   *Demonstrates clinical improvement of infants and children with a variety of medical conditions.*


*Massage therapy enhances weight gain in preterm infants.*

**Lymph**

**General**


Base study demonstrated in dogs that lymph flow can be sustained indefinitely by massage.


*Massage increases lymph flow rate by seven to nine times.*


*Massage strongly influences lymph flow.*

**Reduction of Lymphedema**


*Discusses the treatment of lymphedema due to cancer surgery or radiotherapy. Treatment with diuretics has declined and the use of mechanical compression devices and/or massage has become more prevalent.*


*Massage therapy reduces lymphedema.*


*Demonstrated reduced edema with manual lymphatic massage and with uniform-pressure pneumatic massage.*

**Musculoskeletal**


Pilot study involving myofascial release, massage, cranio cervical manipulation, and physiotherapy shows marked improvements in gait, range of motion and foot-to-floor force.


*Massage produces an increase in plasma myoglobin and helps decrease muscle tension and pain after repeated treatments.*


*Massage is beneficial for adhesions in chronic bursitis.*


*Massage reduces pain, lessens stiffness and fatigue.*
Pain Treatment

Back Pain


Massage is more effective for treating chronic back pain.


Massage is effective in relieving and controlling subacute low-back pain.

Cancer


Therapeutic massage is a beneficial nursing intervention that promotes relaxation and alleviates the perception of pain and anxiety in hospitalized cancer patients.


Cancer patient post-test scores on the Rotterdam Symptom Checklist and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory improved. Massage reduces anxiety, tension, pain, and depression.

Headache


A controlled trial on specific manual therapy on the neck to reduce headache as compared with cold pack treatments on the neck. The type of manual therapy used has a specific effect in reducing post-traumatic headache.


Confirms clinical and physiological effects of massage.

General


Massage stimulates the brain to produce endorphins, the body's natural pain control.


Identifies and validates specific activities considered important in the implementation of selected cutaneous stimulation pain management. These included heat and cold application, massage, and Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS).


Massage reduces acute and chronic pain and increases muscle flexibility and tone.

Pregnancy


Massage reduces morning sickness.


Massage reduces duration of labor, hospital stay and post-partum depression.
Psychological/Emotional


> Back massage, as an alternative or adjunct to pharmacological treatment, is a clinically effective nursing intervention for the promotion of sleep.


> Examines the effects of slow stroke back massage (SSBM) on systolic and diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, and skin temperature. SSBM was associated with decreases in blood pressure and heart rate, an increase in skin temperature, and vital signs indicating relaxation.


> Chair Massage reduces anxiety levels for employees.

Sports Medicine


> Reviews techniques and previous research on effects of massage on blood flow and composition, edema, connective tissue, muscle and the nervous system. Massage in sports medicine is justified.


> Suggests that sports massage reduces delayed onset muscle soreness and creatine kinase when administered two hours after the termination of eccentric exercise.

This is a sample of research on the efficacy of massage. The AMTA Foundation will provide a searchable online database of scientific research citations relevant to massage and bodywork by October 31, 2001. The database will be available at no charge through the AMTA Foundation Web site: www.amtamassage.org/foundation.