

Incorporating Reflexology into Your Life

Footprints for Health

You walk on them all day, but did you know your feet do more than carry you from one place to the next? They also have a unique connection to balanced health and well-being. In a form of bodywork known as reflexology, the feet are said to contain reflex areas that mirror and connect to all parts of the body--and pressure on these points can actually influence your state of health.

What is Reflexology

The roots of reflexology draw, in part, from the ancient healing art of foot massage, practiced the world over, from Asian and Egyptian civilizations to tribal communities of the Americas. Early archaeological digs have revealed statues

relaxation technique. Using the thumb, finger, and hand, gentle pressure is applied to reflex areas of the feet in order to decrease stress and bring the body into equilibrium. While some reflexologists also apply treatment to the hands and ears, the foot--with its greater quantity of sensitive nerve endings--is considered the most amenable to this approach.

Although simplistic in application, the effects of the treatment can be profound. Through activation of nerve receptors in the hands and feet, new messages flood into the body system, changing its tempo and tone. In essence, the foot or hand becomes a conduit for sharing information throughout the



The foot has a greater quantity of sensitive nerve endings than other body parts.

of Buddha in China and Japan, and Vishnu (a Hindu god) in India, depicting markings of specific areas on the feet. But it has only been within the last century that this work has established a foothold, so to speak, in Western practice.

As we know it today, reflexology is viewed primarily as a stress reduction or

body. Function in the connecting area is improved and, at the same time, the body experiences overall relaxation and benefits to the circulation and elimination systems. When the body's systems are at optimal functioning, self-healing is enhanced.

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*As I see it,
every day you
do one of two
things: build
health or
produce disease
in yourself.*

-Adelle Davis

Office Hours and Contact

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In this sense, reflexology is not a medical treatment for specific symptoms or diseases, but rather a way to facilitate the body's inherent healing power. Therefore, it stands to reason that paying attention to your feet can also be a great preventive measure and one easily incorporated into a daily routine.

How and why reflexology works the way it does is still up for debate. Some say it involves communication through the nervous system; other theories point to opening blockages of chi, or vital energy, in the body. Regardless, scientific studies have documented its benefit for a variety of ailments, ranging from acute disorders to chronic diseases. The majority of reflexology research has come from China where the technique is commonly used in hospitals and homes for both health maintenance, and as adjunct to medical care. Some of the positive findings include reduction of pain, improvement in circulation, release of tension, and improved effectiveness of medication, as well as benefits for diabetes and headaches.

Fancy Footwork

Kevin Kunz, author of several reflexology books and codirector of the Reflexology Research Project, emphasizes the importance of making reflexology a part of your life. Consistency is key if you expect results, and foot homework is a low-cost, efficient way to extend the benefits of weekly sessions with your reflexologist. The techniques can be practiced even while you're busy doing something else. You can purchase devices such as foot rollers for use under the desk, but even inexpensive homemade devices will do, Kunz says. "You can put a golf ball in a sock, tie it up, and you have a roller. Anything to cause stimulation has a beneficial effect."

Reflexology is also a safe and effective technique for infants and children, soothing their emotions and promoting sleep. Naturally available and noninvasive, this approach can enhance communication between parent and child and aid in developing the child's physical awareness.

Feedback and Stimulation

According to Kunz, lack of stimulation for the feet is a major problem in our society. We box our feet in shoes and forbid them to traipse the natural environment. Some American feet never even see sunlight, much less travel naked on a forest floor. "The feet carry the body, in more ways than one," Kunz says. "Constant feedback from the feet is needed in order for the body to make the proper responses." There is no challenge for the foot in walking on flat surfaces. Feet crave stimulation, and they were built for a variety of surfaces.

The Japanese, as well as Europeans, have addressed this basic need by creating health pathways to stimulate every part of the foot. "This comes from taki fumi," Kunz says, "to step upon bamboo. Here we call them stroll pathways. The idea is that you stroll along, and as you do, you are strengthening the system. It's great exercise and gives you more endurance."

In Asia, pathways frequently feature cobblestones for stimulation, but a sandy beach or rocky hiking trail can provide variation underfoot.

Whatever path you choose, get off the pavement, free your feet, and let them do their thing. "Over thousands of years," Kunz says, "every culture has discovered it in some shape or form. The foot is it."



Scientific studies have documented the benefits of reflexology for a variety of ailments.

Soothe Your Skin's Winter Ailments

Kayla Fioravanti

The drying effects of winter are upon us. Here are some at-home ideas to help soothe your skin through this challenging season.

Cleanse

Put away your foaming gels and soaps and stock up on creamy products. Cleansing creams, lotions, and milks are great winter choices, because they don't contain the harsh, oil-stripping detergents found in most cleansing gels.

Tone

Shelve your astringents and switch to a toner. In the cold months, your skin needs to be soothed and balanced, not dried out further.

Moisturize

Choose heavier creams than you would in summer months. You can even use your heavy eye cream on your lips and face. If your skin itches, the dry air is causing the moisture in the top layer of your skin to evaporate quickly. Slather those areas with extra moisture until you

feel relief, and never be afraid of using pure oils on your skin--a bottle of jojoba or olive oil is great to have on hand.

Exfoliate

Exfoliate twice a week to remove dead skin cells and help your skin absorb the extra moisture you are using. Because central heating systems reduce the amount of sebum our skin secretes, contributing to dryness, exfoliation will free this natural regulating agent. Use a cream-based exfoliant with jojoba beads, so your body can soak up the rich oils.

Hydrate

For a simple in-home hydrotherapy treatment, start your day with a steamy shower. Just as you are finishing, switch the water to cold for about 15 seconds and then back to warm for 15 seconds. Repeat the process for two minutes.

Shower and Bathe with Oils

Did you know you can apply body oil, lotion, or cream during your shower or

bath? The heat and steam help your skin to thoroughly absorb the moisture.

Boost Your Immune System

Lymphatic Drainage Therapy Fights Infection

Does your immune system work overtime? If so, you might want to give it a boost by seeing a massage therapist or bodyworker trained in lymphatic drainage therapy. This technique can boost your immunity by increasing the production of antibodies, stimulating circulation, moving congestion out of the body, and reducing swelling, especially after surgery.

The lymphatic system supports our body's immune function and involves several organs, glands, and tissues, hundreds of lymph nodes, and a network of vessels. A clear lymph fluid flows through these vessels and carries the metabolic waste (bacteria, dead cells, fats, fluids, proteins, and viruses) to the lymph nodes, where it is filtered. These nodes often swell when we are sick.

The lymphatic drainage techniques used by massage therapists and bodyworkers gently stimulate lymph nodes, help correct swelling and stagnation in those nodes, reduce local fluid retention, boost the overall immune system, and provide relaxation. As an essential tool in the treatment of lymphedema (excess lymphatic fluid), this therapy is often applied postoperatively and can be especially beneficial for breast cancer patients.

Administering this treatment requires advanced training and is performed with gentle, massage-like strokes. There should be no discomfort involved; in fact, you may feel you are hardly being worked on at all.

Aftercare

After your lymphatic drainage

treatment, it's possible you could feel some mild, flu-like symptoms, depending on how much strain your body has been under prior to treatment. This strain may be due to environmental pollutants, medication, and diet. Most people leave a session simply feeling relaxed, but if you don't feel at the top of your game, drink plenty of water, limit your salt intake, and stay physically active.

Lymphatic drainage is one way to give your wellness a boost in a busy world that makes many demands on your immune system.

*Good
information is
the best
medicine.*

-Michael E. DeBakey

This has been a horrendous cold and flu season! I hope you have not fell victim to those nasty bugs! If you have, remember to stay hydrated, eat lots of fresh fruits and veggies, and get plenty of rest. The use of essential oils can also be beneficial. If you need more information on wich oils to use, give me a call or send me an e-mail message. I'm sure we can select the appropriate oils for your specific need.

This spring, I will begin offering classes on how to make your own lip balm, sugar and salt scrubs, and hand/body lotions from items you may already have in your cupboard! Look for e-mail notifications soon!

Winter Detox Special!

Package of 4 sessions for \$200

Includes: 2 Reflexology sessions, 1 Raindrop Technique
and 1 Lymphatic Drainage Massage

Mention this newsletter and receive \$10 off.
Offer expires March 31, 2013

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