

Massage Effective in Treating Common Ailments

By Julie Engebretson

An increasing amount of research suggests that massage helps to ease or prevent common ailments that are most often treated with prescription drugs and/or extended hospitalization. Some of the most surprising research supports the effectiveness of massage therapy in reinforcing psychological stability and its positive effects on preterm infants.

Studies show that massage therapy can reduce anxiety and depression associated with anorexia and bulimia, post traumatic stress disorder, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

Patients suffering from eating disorders who received massage therapy two times a week for a little over a month experienced a decrease in anxiety, depression, and body dissatisfaction, while their dopamine levels increased.^{1,2} Survivors of the 1996 Hurricane Andrew underwent massage therapy to treat symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. They also experienced decreased anxiety and depression, and an decrease in cortisol (stress hormone levels).³ And following 10 days of massage therapy, chronic fatigue syndrome sufferers experienced fewer somatic symptoms, and less difficulty sleeping as cortisol levels decreased and dopamine levels increased.⁴

Massage also has affected the weight gain, sleep quality, and overall development of preterm infants. Infants who were massaged before sleeping, had a tendency to fall asleep more quickly and exhibited more consistent sleeping patterns than infants who were not massaged.⁶ After eight months, the same infants who received massage therapy as newborns displayed optimal cognitive and motor control development.⁷

References

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