

# Helping Veterans and Wounded Warriors

This nation's military veterans and wounded warriors continue to fight, long after they come off the battlefields. They fight to be whole again and to reclaim their physical and psychological health. Many forms of massage and bodywork can help them do just that.

## Therapeutic Massage

With its ability to meld body and mind, massage is an excellent way for veterans to reintegrate. Not only can this kind of therapeutic touch address the physical wounds, it can help bring a sense of normalcy back into daily life. "Gratifying physical experiences, such as massages ... may be experiences that patients build up that are not contaminated by trauma, and which may

significant reductions in physical pain, physical tension, irritability, anxiety/worry, and depression after massage. As a result, researchers are hoping to show in Phase 2 of their study that massage could diminish our veterans' needs for opioids for pain management, a significant concern for the US Department of Defense and the veterans themselves.

Many of our military personnel returning from battle zones come home less than whole. In cases of amputation, massage can help control edema, deal with neuromas, improve skin health, and loosen scar tissue. For more on this topic, read "David's Heroes" in the November/December 2014 issue of

*A smile is a  
curve that sets  
everything  
straight*



Reiki's noninvasive nature makes it an effective choice for treating PTSD.

serve as a core of new gratifying experiences," writes Bessel van der Kolk, author of *Traumatic Stress*.

Research on massage and veterans, funded by the National Institutes of Health, has shown considerable promise for this hands-on therapy. An initial 2014 study found that veterans reported

*Massage Bodywork* magazine. Find it online at [www.messageandbodyworkdigital.com/i/398416](http://www.messageandbodyworkdigital.com/i/398416).

When visiting a massage therapist for the first time, expect a comprehensive intake process to facilitate your session. If you

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## Office Hours and Contact

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are a veteran or wounded warrior, your therapist will want to discuss the extent of your injuries with you, the medical procedures you've undergone, and any ongoing health issues, as well as medications you're currently taking. All of these questions help inform the therapist how to work most effectively and safely with you, so be honest and forthcoming in your responses. As with any massage, be sure to let your therapist know if anything makes you uncomfortable during your session--whether it's that the room temperature is too hot or the massage pressure is too deep. At any time, you can end the session if the work is too intense or you need a break.

### CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

Craniosacral therapy (CST) has shown considerable promise in helping military veterans and other posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) sufferers. The developer of CST, the late John E. Upledger, DO, OMM, believed this subtle hands-on therapy could make a difference. When he invited veterans to be part of intensive CST programs in 1999, he found that their depression and anxiety levels dropped considerably after the therapy was administered, and that feelings of hopelessness, which had once been pervasive, quickly dissipated.

Further evidence for CST came in 2004-2005, when military personnel returning from duty in combat regions were exposed to the therapy at California's Naval Hospital Lemoore. "The results were absolutely profound," says retired commanding officer Sandy DeGroot, who oversaw the program. "It's very hard for [those returning from active combat zones] to come back fully and be in the present moment. The CST work allowed them to release trauma held in the body."

### REFLEXOLOGY

According to author Paula Stone, reflexology is a highly effective therapy for PTSD, a condition that affects more than 5.2 million Americans every year. "Acute sustained stress erodes the very fabric of our being, while acute trauma can tear it. Whether prolonged or sudden, traumatic life experiences wound a person in body, emotions, mind, and soul, and can result in PTSD. Compassionate bodywork,

including reflexology, can help heal the body and the person."

She says two benefits of using reflexology for clients with PTSD are (1) it can be utilized when massage and other touch therapies cannot and (2) the client remains clothed. "Reflexology improves the client's sense of well-being, improves sleep, reduces anxiety, and often reduces the need for pain medications, especially following surgery or cancer treatments." Stone says foot reflexology improves the function of all body systems. "Immediately noticeable are improvements in the flow of bioelectrical energy, blood, lymph, and nerve impulses. Reflexology also works energetically by balancing the body's energy systems. It works in harmony with a broad spectrum of energy therapies, such as polarity therapy and Asian medicine."

### FINDING HELP

Other modalities that have offered relief for members of our nation's military include breath work, Healing Touch, myofascial release, reiki, Therapeutic Touch, trauma touch therapy, and even yoga. More are being added to the list every day.

If you or someone you know is a veteran or wounded warrior, and is suffering, reach out. Contact your local Veterans Affairs offices, visit the Wounded Warrior Project

([www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)) or Comfort for America's Uniformed Services (CAUSE; [www.cause-usa.org](http://www.cause-usa.org)), and make an appointment with your massage therapist or bodyworker.

For more information on PTSD, visit the National Center for PTSD, US Department of National Veterans Affairs, at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov).



**The fight is not over for many wounded warriors after they come home.**

# 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.

Reflexology is viewed primarily as a stress reduction or 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.

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 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.

Scientific studies have documented the benefits of reflexology for a variety of ailments, ranging from reduction of pain, improvement in circulation, and release of tension, to improved effectiveness of medication, as well as benefits for diabetes and headaches.

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.



**Treat your feet, and body, to reflexology.**

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## The Sunshine Vitamin

*Shelley Burns*

In the world of skin health, we focus on ways to improve skin quality. We work to prevent acne, cellular damage, dryness, and wrinkles. It is less common to discuss how a skin-care strategy may increase risk of developing other health conditions.

Skin cancer is one example. To prevent skin cancer, we protect ourselves with sunscreen--especially during the summer months. But by using sunscreen we are blocking the absorption of vitamin D, the "sunshine" vitamin.

Vitamin D is fat soluble and contains powerful antioxidant and anticarcinogenic properties that can prevent premature aging and cellular damage. Solid research indicates that vitamin D plays a role in reducing the risk of cancer, specifically breast, colon,

and prostate cancers. Vitamin D has been associated with preventing diabetes by reducing insulin sensitivity. It also improves heart health, reduces the risk of multiple sclerosis, strengthens bones, and decreases the effects of seasonal affective disorder.

Vitamin D can help resolve skin conditions like psoriasis, as it plays a role in skin cell regulation, including cell turnover and growth. Vitamin D can be effective in reducing the itching and flaking associated with this disorder. Ultraviolet B (UVB) treatments have long been used successfully in treating psoriasis because UVB produces vitamin D in the body.

Getting between 5-10 minutes of direct sun exposure daily on the arms, face, hands, and back (without sunscreen) can

provide enough vitamin D to meet your daily requirements, though sun exposure does present a risk. Because it is difficult to obtain enough vitamin D through food, many prefer to use supplements. Research on the health benefits of ingesting vitamin D led experts to advise an intake of 25-50 micrograms daily.

*Shelley Burns is a doctor of naturopathic medicine and completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. She has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.*



*A good laugh  
recharges your  
battery*

REFLEXOLOGY BY KATIE

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