The benefits of massage for pain management

By Larissa Brito

We’ve all been there before. You wake up to start the day or go to pick up something from the floor and all of the sudden you feel it. Or maybe you’re at work typing away at your desk and your head starts to throb and you grab your neck for a little relief. It’s called pain and it’s not usually welcomed in our day to day lives. But with that being said, we all get busy, appointments, kids, work, friends, who has the time to deal with it? Most people don’t but ignoring those seemingly small aches and pains can lead to bigger and unexpected problems.

Pain affects the body emotionally as well as physically. According to the Cleveland Clinic, chronic pain can lead to anxiety, depression, and anger. Other symptoms of chronic pain are lack of energy, increased blood pressure, and changes in appetite. If you find yourself snapping at you co workers, or not wanting to do the things you usually enjoy because of fear of re-injury or being more sore than you already are, it’s time to reevaluate how much pain is affecting your life and what can be done about it.

A great first step to managing pain is to find the root of the problem. Pain that is derived from certain medical conditions such as arthritis and fibromyalgia may not just “go away,” but doing things to combat the stress and anxiety that comes with it can help. Our body *physically* reacts to our emotions, including stress and anxiety. It can cause headaches, stomach aches, tense and achy muscles, and even skin sensitivity.

So what can help?! Of course it’s important to consult with your doctor before starting any treatments, but getting a therapeutic massage may be able to help. Research on massage and pain management has increased over the years and studies have shown that massage is beneficial for many conditions and pain is no exception. A study on low back pain discovered that those who received massages recovered quicker and felt more relief from massage then other treatments. Another study found that massage increased endorphins and decreased heart rate and stress hormone levels after one session.

 **So what kind of massage can work for you?**

There are many massage modalities that are offered in spas and health clinics, but what is the best for you? If you are looking to unwind and relieve some stress, a swedish or hot stone massage could work for you. A typical swedish massage is a 60 or 90 minute service that uses long steady strokes down the neck, back, arms and legs with body oil or creme. It is a soothing massage that increases circulation, which can be healing to sore and tense muscles. Swedish massage provides deep relaxation, you may even find yourself falling asleep! A hot stone massage falls under the same line as a swedish, but warm stones are incorporated into the treatment bringing even more relief and relaxation. If you typically run hot or have sensitive skin you might not enjoy a hot stone treatment, but don’t fret, a swedish massage can be just as relaxing! If you are looking for more specific work and want to feel more pressure on your muscles, then a deep tissue massage is for you. Deep tissue breaks up muscular fiber adhesions through pressing deeper into muscle tissue (hence the name.) Either modality is healing and helpful to pain relief, it’s all about what makes you feel good! So if you’re tired of your weekly headaches and tight shoulders do something about it! You should feel immediate results after one massage, but depending how long you have been dealing with your pain it can take a few sessions to see more specific results like increased range in motion and long term decreased pain. Here at BCS we offer 30, 60, and 90 minute massages that target your concerns. Our licensed massage therapists are here to answer any questions and provide the massage that is right for you.

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