

# Releaf Massage Therapy

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## The Implications of Bodywork

### Human Touch Has Powerful Results

Cathy Ulrich

Whether in giving or receiving, touch is as essential to human survival as is food. Infants deprived of touch, even when they are getting adequate nutrition, will fail to thrive. Elders isolated by loss of partners and friends become depressed not only because of the absence of social interaction, but also because of the simple loss of physical contact.

We calm our pets by stroking them, we greet each other with a hug or a handshake, and we soothe our children by holding them. No other form of connection is as powerful and universal as touch. Taking a look at how this sensation is connected to the brain provides insight into the significance of bodywork.

because of our skin. Our skin tells us about our environment and ourselves. When we touch something with our fingers, we're not only sensing the object, we're also feeling our own skin, our own boundaries.

In the first few days of an embryo's life, the cells that eventually become a fully formed baby divide into three layers. The brain and skin come from the same layer, and they develop together, not only before birth, but well into the first year of life. When a baby is held, cuddled, and breast-fed, she's getting crucial stimulation to build neural connections between her skin and her brain that will ultimately last her entire lifetime.



No matter the age, human touch plays a significant role in mental and physical health.

### Skin and the Brain

The adult human lives inside an envelope of about 18 square feet of skin. Every inch houses thousands of nerve endings and various kinds of sensory receptors, all working to tell the brain about its surroundings. The cold of an ice cube, the softness of a cat's fur, a warm breeze, the caress of a loved one--all of these feelings are possible

Study after study has shown that touch is not only important for development, but is crucial to survival. James H.M. Knox of Johns Hopkins Hospital reported in 1915 that babies left in orphanages and given proper nutrition died at a rate of about 90 percent. Other studies of the same era confirmed

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*"Become the change you seek in the world"*  
-Mahatma Ghandi

#### Office Hours and Contact

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these findings and showed that those babies who did survive were often mentally handicapped and stunted in their growth. These valuable studies helped institutions understand the importance of touch. When staff was added to provide enough time for each child to be held, handled, and touched, mortality rates dropped dramatically.

## Massage for Children

Those early statistical studies showed how vital touch is to developing infants. Researchers are also finding that giving massage to premature infants can improve their growth and overall health. A study conducted by the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami found that when stable premature babies were given five, one-minute massages a day, they gained 47 percent more weight than their counterparts who didn't get massage.

A 2001 study conducted by TRI showed that when mothers gave their infants a 15-minute massage before bedtime, these sleep-challenged kids went to sleep more quickly and were more alert during daytime hours.

Conversely, clinical research and sociological studies link touch deprivation with aggression. A 2002 study reported that adolescents with a history of aggressive behavior showed less aggression and were less anxious after receiving a 20-minute massage twice a week for five weeks.

Massage also reduces the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder so kids can concentrate better, and it's even been found that the right kind of touch can help kids with autism relate better to teachers and family members.

## Massage for Adults

Ongoing research by the Touch Research Institute continues to prove that massage is an important therapy for many conditions. After a massage, levels of the stress hormone cortisol drop in saliva tests, examinations show an improvement in alertness and relaxation, depression scores decrease, and mental focus improves.

The exponential growth of the bodywork field is a testament to the value of safe, therapeutic touch. Of course bodywork

can play an essential role in the healing of specific chronic or acute orthopedic conditions, but it also serves as a powerful aide in improving the quality of life for adults.

Stan, a former client, was going through a nasty divorce. He had friends to support him emotionally, but it seemed that the thing he missed most was the nurturing touch of his partner. He credits weekly massage appointments, along with seeing a counselor, to his emotional recovery. Massage can be a healthy way to get that much-needed human contact.

## Massage for Elders

People confined to nursing homes rarely get more than daily hygienic care in terms of touch. Yet elders need touch as much as infants; studies show that when they receive regular massage, the elderly have less depression and anxiety,

experience better physical coordination, and show a decrease of stress hormone in their saliva.

Geriatric massage is a growing field requiring specialized training, and many massage therapists offer it in their practices. Some nursing homes now provide massage to their residents. Elders appear to respond as well to bodywork as, if not better than, their younger counterparts.

## Contact for All Ages

Before babies learn about their hands and feet, they need the touch of loved ones and caregivers. We retain that need our entire lives. Remember to savor touch the next time you're lying on a massage table. Your therapist is not only working out tight muscles, she's contacting your entire nervous system, calming you through pathways that were put in place before you were born.



Infant massage has shown great benefits in calming babies and helping pre-term infants thrive.

# Stay Hydrated

Jennie Hastings Stancu

Has your therapist told you about the importance of drinking water?

After all, our bodies are composed of approximately 60 percent water, and all of our bodily functions are sustained by water. Dehydration is one of the most common detriments to our health, and one of the easiest problems to fix. Make staying hydrated simple and seamlessly interwoven throughout your day.

## START EACH DAY OFF RIGHT

Start your morning with a tall, room-temperature glass of water with lemon squeezed into it, before you start taking any tea, coffee, or food. Front-loading hydration is helpful to the body. And be luxurious with your water--for a special treat, add mint, cucumber, or lemon.

## HALF YOUR WEIGHT

It is difficult to know how much water is enough. One rule of thumb is to take half your body weight in pounds, and drink that many ounces of water per day.

So if you weigh 150 pounds, this would equal 75 ounces of water. For many of us, however, this might not be enough. If you are working hard, or you live in a particularly dry climate, you might need to drink even more than this.

## WHAT ABOUT BPA?

You've probably seen the phrase "BPA free" on water bottles, and you may want to gravitate toward these. BPA stands for bisphenol A, which is a chemical found in polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins.

According to [Mayoclinic.org](http://Mayoclinic.org), some research has shown BPA can seep from a container into foods and beverages, and this is concerning because of possible health effects BPA has on the brain and behavior. Look for non-plastic bottles, or look for the "BPA free" logo.

## OTHER DRINKS

Drinking herbal tea is a good way to stay hydrated. You can also augment your hydration with electrolyte-fortified water or sports drinks. However, be

aware that a lot of these drinks have incredibly high levels of sugar in them. Hydration isn't a healthy habit if you drink a day's worth of sugar in every glass. So check the label before you buy.

Jennie Hastings Stancu is a licensed massage therapist and author.



Stay hydrated to keep your body functioning optimally

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# 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.

*"Make yourself  
a priority"*

-unknown

In the midst of what can feel like chaos, I hope to send you some calmness and positivity...

First, a sincere "THANK YOU" to all who support and trust us on your healing journey! We are honored to continue to serve you, and excited to share new options to further assist you.

Coming soon... PEMF (pulsed electromagnetic field) therapy. A BEMER is being added as an adjunct service outside of massage therapy. This FDA class II medical device will provide a contact less option for those who wish, or can be used in conjunction with existing therapy.

The BEMER is designed to improve circulation, supporting the body's natural self-regulating processes. A unique signal is transmitted into the body via an electromagnetic field, stimulating microcirculation.

I'm extremely excited for the opportunity to use this personally, and truly can't wait to share all the benefits with you. Details and more information will be coming soon!

Finally, Releaf products are always a request during the holiday season. If you are interested in purchasing, we can arrange a pick up time. Like previous years, hours on a Sat will be announced to shop in person.

Stay tuned and well wishes to all!

Andrea Cain

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