

# **“The Benefits of Regular Massage”**

## **A Natural Touch – Massage Therapy Jodi Saum-Stockner, LMT**

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Once people discover the many joys and benefits of massage, a common question arises — "How often should I schedule my massage sessions?" Of course, there is no set answer, but studies indicate that massage at regular intervals is most beneficial to your overall health.

In a Newsweek article entitled "The Magic of Touch," the advantages of frequent massage are considered. The following excerpts help to answer the question, "How often?"

"A weekly massage may seem an indulgence, but new research suggests it can have major health benefits....

"Since instituting a program of massage, job-specific exercises and ergonomics in 1990, the Virginia-based company [Wampler Foods] has cut repetitive-stress injuries by 75 percent....

"From assembly lines to corporate headquarters, Americans are discovering the magic of massage. At Boeing and Reebok, headaches, back strain and fatigue have all fallen since the companies started bringing in massage therapists . . . Doctors have started prescribing massage to help patients manage stress and pain. And a few HMOs have begun sharing in the cost. 'Massage is medicine, not merely an indulgence,' says Laura Favin of Not Just a Luxury Onsite Massage in New York....

"Scientists are now finding that massage can reduce blood pressure, boost the immune system, dampen harmful stress hormones and raise mood-elevating brain chemicals such as serotonin. And you can't beat massage for relaxation. Babies fall asleep faster when massaged than when rocked — and they stay asleep, rather than waking the moment Mom tiptoes away. All these factors, says Tiffany Field, founder of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami's School of Medicine, 'put massage in the same category with proper diet and exercise as something that helps maintain overall health.' ...

"The effects aren't always so straightforward. Massage can also stimulate nerves that carry signals from the skin to the brain, triggering changes throughout the body.... Field showed that massage (as opposed to light touch) stimulates the brain's vagus nerve, causing the secretion of food-absorption hormones, including insulin. Nerve stimulation probably explains other benefits as well.... Dr. James Dillard of Columbia University [says], 'Every nerve cell in the body has some connection to every other nerve cell.'

"Like exercise, massage does more for you if you engage in it regularly... even a monthly treatment can help maintain general health. 'Touch is basic to survival,' says Elliot Greene, past president of AMTA [American Massage Therapy Assn.]. That's all the excuse anyone should need to indulge."

Remember, your body strives to maintain optimum health by keeping all of its systems in balance. Along with proper nutrition, exercise and rest, massage relaxes tense muscles and stimulates the body's communication lines to help it do its job — and to keep you feeling your best. So, make regular massage a priority in your life for a healthier tomorrow!