

What we know (and have known for centuries)

In India in [3000 BCE](#) (or earlier), massage was considered a sacred system of healing, passed down through generations to heal injuries, relieve pain, and prevent and cure illnesses. Those who subscribe to the tenets of [Ayurveda](#) (“life health” medicine) believe that massage can restore the body’s natural and physical balance so that it can heal naturally.

What science now tells us

A [study](#) published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* showed that even one Swedish (deep-tissue) massage session can provide medical benefits. It significantly decreases arginine vasopressin (AVP), the hormone that constricts blood vessels, raises blood pressure and reduces urine excretion. It also reduces cortisol, the stress hormone, and increases lymphocytes, the white blood cells that attack cancer.

How massage therapy affects inflammation

Instead of popping an ibuprofen to relieve inflammation, you might try massage therapy as a drug-free option. According to Canadian research, massage therapy can also [moderate inflammation](#) – especially during recovery of injured muscle tissues – by changing gene expression and promoting the biogenesis of [mitochondria](#), the “batteries” that power cells. Additionally, it may help patients with [chronic inflammatory disease](#).

How massage therapy boosts the immune system

Although massage therapy is not typical “medicine,” it can [help fight infection](#) by boosting the immune system, the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) says. It increases the activity of the body’s white blood cells, the NK (natural killer) cells that fight infection. In a [controlled study](#) of HIV-positive patients, those who received massage therapy showed enhanced immune function and an increase in white blood cells. Another study of women with stage 1 and 2 breast cancer saw increased lymphocytes and NK cells, along with enhanced dopamine and serotonin, the neurotransmitters that boost mood



How MASSAGE THERAPY Works

By triggering an involuntary – but expected – relaxation response from the nervous system, massage can produce physical and emotional benefits. This causes your heart and breathing rates to slow down and your blood pressure and stress hormones to decrease, counteracting the negative effects of stress. When pressure is applied to soft muscle tissue during a massage, it improves blood and lymph circulation and leads to a reduction of swelling.

Adding massage to your wellness plan

Proper diet and exercise are likely part of your wellness plan, but you may want to add massage therapy to it – especially if you have a lot of [stress](#). According to the American Psychological Association, stress is linked to the six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung problems, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide. It only makes sense that when stress levels subside, better health results. Massage therapy can reduce stress; therefore, it benefits health and wellness by producing a sense of relaxation and tranquility.

How to become a massage therapist

[Florida Academy](#) in Fort Myers offers comprehensive massage therapy programs (with the flexibility of day and evening classes) that can get you started in your career in as few as 30 weeks. Choose either a 600-hour program to learn the basics needed to start your career, as well as hands-on Swedish massage training, or the 900-hour (eight-month) innovative, biologically based therapies program. When you conclude your training and earn your license, you will be qualified for a massage therapist position in a clinic, chiropractic office, spa, hotel, fitness center, sports medicine facility, cancer treatment location and more.

[Contact](#) Florida Academy today.