

What is new at Touching Well?

My “belly year” continues, this month I am going on the practitioner's course of [Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy™](#). Maya abdominal massage focuses on the abdomen, pelvis and low back to promote and restore digestive and reproductive health. When internal organs have shifted out of position it restricts the flow of blood, lymph, nerve and “chi”, thus potentially creating disease. This technique corrects the surrounding muscles and ligaments, improves organ function, normalizes hormones, and flushes toxins. Treatments are available from the end of November.

In September I had my right bunion operated upon. It was not nearly as painful as I expected – as long I put my leg up and rested. As soon as my dressing came off I used Deep Oscillation to bring the swelling down further and promote healing. Three weeks after the operation I started to massage my scar. This prevents the tissues sticking together as they heal (adhesions). Of course I also have to do exercises – I am proud to report that I can wiggle my right big toe a lot now – actually the same amount as my left big toe.

Manifesto of a pro-touch society

A [petition](#) created by Gill Tree, founder of the [Essentials for Health](#) Massage School.

Massage is not a luxury for the few, a reward or treat but an essential, cost effective and often cost saving therapy. Nurturing touch for the infant is more important than food.

Without it a child can suffer marasmus- they wither away and die. Beyond infancy; it is equally important for a grown person to stay chemically balanced. Research tells us that a society where children are held closely to their mother for their first year in life is 60% more likely to be a non-violent society.

We can all benefit from the stress reducing effects of massage. 80 percent of visits to GP surgeries are stress related and massage provides a preventative role in health care whilst also reducing the symptoms of many diseases and disorders. It is widely used in managing back pain, has a role to play in reducing absenteeism at work and is employed in specialist hospitals in assisting in recovery from treatment and surgery. It

can raise self esteem and self worth amongst the sick, mentally ill and elderly and is widely provided throughout the UK in hospices often by massage therapists who volunteer their time to improve quality of life and reduce the pain and suffering of the terminally ill.

We need to create a cultural shift that recognises the crucial importance of touch for our mental and physical

wellbeing and embrace the professional role of the Massage therapist as a catalyst for the release of stress, tension and stimulated good health.

Wishing you a spring in your step,

Regina Dengler

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Massage helps carpal tunnel

The strong ligaments of the wrist bind together the eight carpal bones, allowing both stability and flexibility. The tight space between that band (Flexor Retinaculum) and the carpals on the inside of the wrist is called the carpal tunnel. The median nerve and nine flexor tendons of the fingers (for bending) run through this channel. When something, such as fluid, bone, or tight tendons, presses on the median nerve within the carpal tunnel one can get wrist pain and numbness to the thumb and first two fingers. This is called carpal tunnel syndrome. It is surprisingly common, with more than 3% of the population being affected ([JAMA. 1999 Jul 14;282\(2\):153-8](#)). Treatment options vary, from massage, exercise and lifestyle changes to cortisone injections and surgery. The first two modalities are generally not recommended by western medicine, lifestyle changes, such as avoiding using vibrating power tools or sleeping with flexed wrists are. Surprisingly extended keyboard and mouse use is not associated with carpal tunnel syndrome, but it is associated with inflamed tendons (tendinitis) in the arms and hands and/or epicondylitis (lateral – tennis elbow, medial – golfers elbow).

A study in Australia looked at the effectiveness of massage including the use of using trigger points for people suffering under carpal tunnel syndrome. Twenty-one participants received 30 minutes of massage twice a week for six weeks. The researchers asked and examined the participants before and after the massages. Already after two weeks of treatment clients reported significant improvements, with an ease of symptoms and more use of the affected hand. ([J Bodyw Mov Ther. 2013 Jul;17\(3\):332-8](#)). When using massage it is important to treat the whole upper body. The median nerve runs from the neck across the chest along the

inner arm through the carpal tunnel to the thumb, fore and middle finger and half of the ring finger. So the nerve could be irritated along its way by tight muscles. Easing these muscles can help to reduce symptoms, or even prevent them in the first place. Chair massage is very effective as a prevention and/or treatment

Foot massage helps carers

Caring for someone loved can be stressful, carers can suffer sleep disturbance and anxiety. The “Carers Complementary Therapy Project” looked at massage as a way to promote well-being amongst carers in a Haematology and Transplant Unit . Fifteen minute chair massages were given to carers of the inpatients, 227 in total over a two year period. Of these carers receiving massage 138 carers presented with stress, 115 with sleep disturbance, 92 with worry and 88 with anxiety. This means that many, if not most, carers received only one massage. The average pre-therapy 'feel good' score was 5/10 and the average post therapy score was 8/10. The carers' feedback included positive comments about changes in their physical, mental and emotional states. . ([Complement Ther Clin Pract. 2013 Aug;19\(3\):119-27](#)). And all that after one 15 minute chair massage! How good does it get?

Recent feedback

Worked wonders with my right arm. Thank you very much.

Sue, Sangenic, Mansfield

Had a frozen shoulder. Eased it off nicely.

Julie, Sangenic, Mansfield

Had pain in my right shoulder. It was very painful after the massage. But the next day I was pain free, and have been ever since.

Sharon, Sangenic, Mansfield



How long does a massage last?

When you have a massage you might feel the benefits for a while afterwards. But with so many important things in life, this is difficult to measure. Researchers in Iran tried to measure massage's effect on blood pressure over time. Fifty women with slightly raised blood pressure (pre-hypertension) were randomly divided into two groups. Twenty-five women received Swedish massage for 10-15 minutes 3 times a week for 10 sessions, the remaining 25 women only relaxed in the same environment. Their blood pressure was measured before and after each session and 72 hours after the end of the study.

They found that the blood pressure was lower in the massage group post-treatment (massage or relaxation). There was a still significantly lower in the massage group three days after the last massage. (*Int J Prev Med.* 2013 May;4(5):511-6.). Unfortunately they did not measure the blood pressure beyond 3 days. I wonder how long the effect goes on. The other question of course is whether this works for people with raised blood pressure instead of medication. Anecdotally people who have regular massage need to review their blood pressure medication after a while...

Womanly massage

... for painful periods

If you ever had painful periods (dysmenorrhea) you know that this can be debilitating. Massage does help prior to menstruation, but does aromatherapy massage help even more? To test this, two groups of nursing students received daily abdominal massage 7 days prior to the start of their period, one with plain almond oil, the other with essential oils added to it (cinnamon, clove, rose and lavender). For the next menstrual cycle the treatment regime was swapped over. The level and duration of

menstrual pain and the amount of menstrual bleeding were significantly lower in the aromatherapy group, giving women affected an alternative to drugs. (*Evid Based Complement Alternat Med.* 2013;2013:742421) This is a great finding as you don't need a therapist to massage your belly (it's great to have one though).

... during pregnancy

As the pregnancy progresses, the centre of gravity moves forward, thus increasing the lower curve of the spine (lumbar lordosis). This means that certain muscles get very tight and can cause back pain. The good news is that massage can help to loosen these muscles, and thus ease the pain. (*Can Fam Physician.* 2013 Aug;59(8):841-2).

... and labour

Does massage relieve pain in the active phase of labour? - it does. Briefly, a physio gave one group of women a labour a 30 minute massage, for another group s/he was present but only answered questions. The women who received the massage had less pain. (*J Physiother.* 2013 Jun;59(2):109-16). I suggest to ask your partner to massage you.

... and during menopause

A woman's experience of symptoms during menopause can vary widely, from hardly any to severe. The latter can impair her quality of life. A randomised trial looked at the effect of massage on psychological symptoms during menopause. In this study there were three groups: 30 women received 30 minute aromatherapy massage twice a week for 4 weeks, 30 women received the same massage with base oil only, and the third group did not receive massage as a control group. Psychological symptoms were reduced in both massage groups, but more so in the aromatherapy massage group. (*Complement Ther Med.* 2013 Jun;21(3):158-63).



MLD after a new knee

MLD is said to work well after surgery. It reduces oedema and thus pain. This was certainly so after my foot operation, but is this also the case for knee replacements? To investigate this forty-three patients received physiotherapy post-knee replacement, half also had MLD on day 2, 3 and 4 post-surgery.

Patients were assessed before the operation, before and after MLD sessions (days 2, 3, and 4) and at 6 weeks post-surgery. This included movement, inflammation and pain.

It was found that people who had received MLD could bend their knee better than those who had not, both on discharge and six weeks post-surgery. (Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 2013 Jun 26). A series of MLD treatment close to the surgery improves one of the main desired outcomes – knee flexion is a major component of walking. What would be the outcome if MLD continued post-discharge?

My mobility is much better

Before I met Regina I could hardly walk and I found it very difficult to get up and down the stairs because of my swollen legs.

As a result of my twice weekly visits to see Regina, the compression bandages she applied to my legs and thighs has brought my swelling down considerably.



My mobility is so much better, going up and down stairs so much easier, as is walking, where my knees no longer ache.

I just wish that I'd known about Regina eight months ago, when my legs first begun to swell. The I would not have had the misfortune of my right calf bursting, and the subsequent treatment to let it heal, which took four months.

I look forward to having further treatment with Regina, to improve my mobility even more.

John, Wollaton, Nottingham

I can move my feet & ankles again

When I came to Regina I was in a desperate state. I've had Lymphoedema really bad in my legs, ankles and feet for about 8 years. My doctor kept telling me to lose weight. Even though I knew being overweight didn't help, I thought something else must be wrong.

I found Regina on the internet and had several weeks of bandage therapy and MLD. I'm able to move my ankles and feet now,



Annette
before and after lymphoedema bandaging

where before they just hurt really bad because the skin was so tight.

Regina is very patient, a good listener and has good sense of humour. She genuinely wants to help her patients as she understands how much they suffer, especially with just day to day tasks.

It's good to know that I have someone in Nottingham that can help me with my condition!

Annette, Forest Fields, Nottingham

*“Do not regret growing older.
It is a privilege denied to many.”*