

## What is new at Touching Well?

Myofascial release (MFR) is *awesome*. That is what I came away with from a recent intensive MFR training course. It is also the word (over)used by one of our wonderful trainers. Words started with s, such as splendid, super, safe, spontaneous, special, sublime and serene, were also often used.

Upon return I plunged straight into applying these gentle techniques, with very good results. One client felt even her organs relaxing during the treatment. I suggest you give it a try, it is as good as massage - I'll keep you posted about the effect of MFR. At the moment I charge the same as massage, I'll review this in a few weeks.

Here is a brief overview, copied from [John Barnes'](#) page, one of the pioneers of MFR (with some "good" technical words):

"Myofascial Release is a safe and very effective hands-on technique that involves applying gentle sustained pressure into the Myofascial connective tissue restrictions to eliminate pain and restore motion. This essential "time element" has to do with the viscous flow and the piezoelectric phenomenon: a low load (gentle pressure) applied slowly will allow a viscoelastic medium (fascia) to elongate.

Trauma, inflammatory responses, and/or surgical procedures create Myofascial restrictions that can produce tensile pressures of approximately 2,000 pounds per square inch on pain sensitive structures that do not show up in many of the standard tests (x-rays, myelograms, CAT scans, etc.)"

### Feedback from on-site massage at Mansfield Building Society

*"It felt like bubbles bursting in my back – amazing." "Really helped my shoulder issue out and loosened my neck muscles, need to do this more often." "Wow! I feel alive again. Great relaxation through the day." "Feel relaxed, calm and energized." "Stimulating rather than lethargic, and not too intense."*

What on earth is fascia? I hear you cry. "Fascia is a specialized system of the body that has an appearance similar to a spider's web or a sweater. Fascia is very densely woven, covering and interpenetrating every muscle, bone, nerve, artery and vein, as well as all our internal organs. It is one continuous structure that exists from head

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to toe without interruption, so that each part of our entire body is connected to every other part by the fascia, like the yarn in a sweater. Fascia plays an important

role in the support and function of our bodies, since it surrounds and attaches to all structures. In the normal healthy state, the fascia is relaxed and wavy in configuration, it has the ability to stretch and move without restriction. When we experience trauma, scarring, or inflammation, the fascia loses its pliability. It becomes tight, restricted, and a source of tension to the rest of the body," a bit like a sweater that sticks to your skin in some places and is matted with blobs of dried paint in other places (not a nice thought). The good news is that MFR can unstick our fascia, stretching and gently easing, encouraging us to move more freely.

Wishing you a spring in your step,

*Regina Dengler*



## Why your posture matters

If you're sitting down right now, chances are you are slouched over in your chair reading this. Most of us don't even notice it, but studies show that the vast majority of us are hurting ourselves daily through our bad posture. In fact, one study found that for 90% of Americans, their normal posture is one in which their back is hunched and neck is pushed forward. Day to day, our posture may not seem like it is affecting our health, but it can actually cause long term back and neck pain, amongst many other things. In 2014 musculoskeletal issues accounted for 32% of the reasons for missing work. Bad posture can lead to a number of issues including, muscle pain, fatigue, tension headaches, misaligned vertebrae and hunched back, digestive issues, breathing difficulty and much more.

The good news, however, is that there are many proactive steps you can take to greatly improve your posture, no matter how long you've been slouching.

Often poor postures comes from the way we sit. Most of us sit either slouched down in our chairs or hunch over our keyboard for a good portion of the day. One way to fix this is through bouts of standing throughout the day (using a sit-stand desk is a great way to do this). Though our posture can still be off when standing, we usually have slightly better posture standing up, and it becomes more obvious when we don't have good posture. However, if you are standing, try to avoid common habits that can misalign your neck and back, such as putting your hands in your pockets or standing with an arm on your hip, or locking your knees (not good for your lower back!). While you are sitting adjust your chair so your desk is at elbow height and your thighs are horizontal with



your knees at a 90° angle and feet flat on the floor (or footrest) . Avoid crossing your legs to keep your spine aligned.

Exercise is another way to build a better posture. Pilates, yoga and Tai Chi are a great ways of strengthening your core and elongating your neck and back. Just a few minutes of exercises a day will encourage a better posture.

On-site massage will not only help you to a better and more upright posture, it also addresses those niggles, aches and pains we all get from, let's call it sub-optimal, posture.

If you do manage to improve your posture, the good news is that it not only boosts your health, but [studies](#) show a good posture can also make you smarter and happier by boosting your memory function, energy, and confidence. It's worth putting in the effort to change the habit of a lifetime. ([Why Your Posture Matters](#)).

## Angel posture test

Sometimes we don't know whether we have a "bad" posture. This test only takes a few seconds, all you need is a wall.

Stand with your feet flat on the ground, with your heels about 6 inches (15 cm) away from the wall., knees unlocked.

Put your back flat against the wall, and place the back of your head against the wall as well with your chin tucked.

Raise your arms up to shoulder height along the wall. Bend your arms at the elbow so that your forearms and fingers point away at from the wall at a 90° angle while your upper arms stay against the wall (get the idea?).

Now rotate your arms upward so that your lower arms and your wrists also touch the wall - you should now have the shape of an angel. If your back arches, or you can't get your wrists to touch the wall, that indicates poor posture. ([Do This 30 Seconds Test To Check Your Posture.](#))



## Enjoy!

Humans are sensory beings. Massage doesn't need to justify pleasing our muscles and skin any more than music has to justify pleasing our ears; chefs don't have to call themselves "nutritional therapists"; hairstylists don't have to pretend that grey hair is a disease. *Enjoyment is a perfectly fine reason to get a massage.* (Virginia Postrel)

Having said that, and wholeheartedly agreed with it, here is a selection of new research. Obviously this is biased, I don't report on the research that is inconclusive (i.e. no "significant" difference between massage and control group) – you can look for that yourself. But how can massage not benefit – provided it is done well (whatever that means).

## Massage helps older people.

A study of studies (in this case a literature review, rather than a meta-analysis) looked at how massage affects older people in residential care. There were 14 studies that qualified to be included; Overall, those studies suggest that massage helps not only the residents but also the nursing staff. Recipients experienced that massage helps with pain, sleep, emotional status and psychosocial health. Massage reduced the necessity for restraint and pharmacological intervention within the the institution. Massage could easily be incorporated into care provision and adopted by care providers and family members as an additional strategy to enhance quality of life for older people. Although it requires ongoing promotion and implementation, integration of massage into the daily care activities offers benefit for promoting health and well-being of the older person along with potential increased engagement of family in care provision. (Int J Older People Nurs. 2016 Feb 15)

A number of studies looked at severely ill people and massage. For example: "Slow-

stroke back massage, as a simple, non-invasive, and cost-effective approach, along with routine nursing care, can be used to improve the symptom cluster of pain, fatigue, and sleep disorders in leukaemia patients." (Cancer Nurs. 2016 Feb 26. ). Don't we all like our back stroked slowly and rhythmically? Similar results were observed from patients receiving massage during their Chemotherapy treatment. They received a twenty minute foot or hand massage during their chemotherapy infusion. Patients reported less pain, nausea, fatigue and anxiety after the massage (Clin J Oncol Nurs. 2016 Apr 1;20(2):E34-40).

## An important breakthrough?

The following study looked at male baldness – can scalp massage help?

Nine healthy Japanese men received 4 minutes of standardized scalp massage per day for 24 weeks using a scalp massage device. Total hair number, hair thickness, and hair growth rate were evaluated before and after.

The study analysis was quite complicated and involved structural engineering techniques, genetics and of course statistics. In summary, scalp massage resulted in increased hair thickness 24 weeks after initiation of massage.

"The stretching forces result in changes in gene expression in human dermal papilla cells. Scalp massage is a way to transmit mechanical stress to human dermal papilla cells [which nurture the hair follicle] in subcutaneous tissue. Hair thickness was shown to increase with scalp massage." (Eplasty. 2016 Jan 25;16). If I understand this right, you can get thicker hair from scalp massage, but not necessarily more of them. My father swore by a certain hair tonic (I think it was called Birkin), he was convinced it stopped his hair loss (honest, I don't get paid anything for this).



## Find it early

In the US, breast cancer-related lymphoedema (BCRL) (or edema as it is spelled there) has been acknowledged as an important clinical issue: a recent update of the [NCCN breast cancer guidelines](#) recommends to: "educate, monitor, and refer for lymphedema management." I understand their NCCN is like our NICE. Anyhow, how do you find it? There has not been the evidence to identify women in the very early stages of lymphoedema. However, some trials find a benefit of treating everyone after surgery with physiotherapy and MLD, and there are more trials on the way to confirm this. ([Cancer Med. 2016 Mar 19](#)). In one such trial 41 women with shoulder issues (cording and pain) after breast surgery received intensive physiotherapy for four weeks. Half of them also had MLD. After four weeks shoulder function, pain and quality of life has improved in both groups. Arm volume had decreased only in the MLD group. And, six women (out of 20) in the physiotherapy only group had lymphoedema, and none in the MLD group. ([Support Care Cancer. 2016 May;24\(5\):2047-57](#)).

## MLD affects the veins

It has been shown that MLD improves the lymphatic flow – but how does it affect the venous blood flow back to the heart? To find out, MLD was applied to the inner and outer thigh and leg to 57 people. Twenty-eight had chronic venous insufficiency, and twenty-nine were healthy. They measured the blood flow of the various veins in the leg before and after, and found that it was increased after MLD. This was true for the deep and the superficial veins. This is good news for everyone, but particularly for people with venous problems, such as leg ulcers. ([Physiotherapy. 2016 Feb 1](#)).

## Recent feedback

*Thank you very much for the chat and the massage yesterday. The massage was wonderful; I was so relaxed afterwards and last night I slept well for the first time in months!*

Tim, Beeston, Nottingham

## Untangling the knot

*I came to see Regina as I had a sharp pain in my right shoulder blade at the back which got so bad my arm seized up. She used the pulsing machine first to relax the muscles in the back. This felt a bit strange at first, I likened it to being massaged by bees. She then conducted an oil based massage on my back to loosen the knot. I was little sore that night but the pain was gone by the end of the weekend.*

Viv, Nottingham

*Fantastic improvement in long-standing leg issue – lovely release and pain relief after treatment which has lasted.*

Andrea, Carlton, Nottingham

## Better healing after football injury

A Bulgarian study compared three groups of young (14-44 years) men recovering from Anterior Cruciate Tendon (a tendon behind the patella deep in the knee joint) reconstruction surgery after a football injury. All groups received physio therapy, two groups additionally had Kinesio taping, and the third group also had Deep Oscillation for two weeks, from day 12 to day 25 post-operatively. All 45 football players improved in terms of pain and swelling within the two week study period, but more so with the Kinesio taping. The group that had both Kinesio taping, and Deep Oscillation recovered best from their surgery. ([XXIV Int Conf for Sports Rehab and Traumatology, April 2015, PB06](#))

While on the theme of knee pain, a review of scientific papers found that massage, yoga and tai chi help best for osteoarthritis in the knee. Massage not only helps with the pain, but also increases the range of motion, without any side effects. ([Complement Ther Clin Pract. 2016 Feb;22:87-92](#))

