

## **ARTHRITIS:** Easing pain through massage

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability, reducing quality of life. It is not a single disease; it is an informal way of referring to joint pain or joint disease. There are different forms of arthritis and related conditions, some of which are chronic. When bones are fused together, there's no longer motion there, so the muscles get tight and can be a source of pain. The good news is that recent studies suggest that massage can help relieving that stiffness and increase mobility in those who suffer from arthritis.

The areas massaged will depend on what type of pain the client has. Pressure can range from very light to deep, depending on the client's preference. Working on the muscle will help in having less pull on joints. Moreover, it relaxes the client, and helps with general pain perception. A study conducted by the University Of Miami School Of Medicine showed that ongoing massage could also lower anxiety and improve grip strength for those with arthritis. Additionally, a common thread between arthritis sufferers is lack of sleep. This is doubly important, as not only can massage help you sleep better, but it can also decrease your pain during the day.

Research corroborates the use of aromatherapy for pain relief. "Aromatherapy is effective because it works directly on the amygdala, the brain's emotional centre" says Mehmet Oz, MD, director of Medicine Centre in New York City. Aromatherapy can't cure arthritis, but it can help significantly, depending on the form of arthritis. Aromatherapy is the therapeutic use of scented essential oils. You can inhale the oils, use them in the bath or massage them into your skin. When you use them for massage they're diluted in carrier oil. Specific essential oils are used according to the individual's need.

Even if you regularly receive professional massage therapy, self-massage in between those sessions will help extend the benefits of your massage appointments. Self-massage is an instinctive activity we automatically do. Think of the last time you had a sore muscle or bumped your head. What did you do? Rubbed it, right? Practicing self-massage on a regular basis will improve your overall comfort. The techniques usually include large, vigorous strokes to help warm up and prepare the muscles, then smaller, more precise strokes to target specific areas of pain or discomfort.

People suffering from pain may have come to experience their bodies as the enemy. Combining massage therapy with other appropriate treatment, will allow the client to experience relief, allowing comfort both physically and psychologically.

There is a list of contraindications for massage, so **Communication is the key to an enjoyable and relaxing massage**. It is important to discuss any issues with the therapist, so to gain feedback and ensure beneficial results.

