

THAI YOGA MASSAGE A WONDERFUL OPTION FOR YOU

By Dennis Stovall

Thai massage has been practiced for several thousand years. It is one branch of Thai medicine, which includes manipulation (of which massage is a part), diet, medicinal treatment and ritual (spiritual ceremony). In Thailand it is used in conjunction with these other forms of treatment, although in other countries it may be used on its own.

Thai massage is based on the belief that all disease is due to an imbalance of the body's energy. Its goal is to promote this balance and therefore assist in the healing of the entire person. To do this, it uses several techniques.

Thai massage uses point pressure, muscle stretching and compression, done in a rhythmic movement of gentle rocking. The first is the application of pressure through leaning into the area being treated. This pressure is less forceful than that used in some other forms of massage and more like the pressure used in shiatsu. Also like shiatsu, Thai massage uses pressure along energy channels. (called "sen" in Thailand, but more commonly known as meridians - which is what they are called in Chinese medicine). The major difference between the two is that Thai massage treats these channels in both directions, while shiatsu moves in only one direction.

Reflexology is also part of a Thai massage session. Reflexology is based on the belief that points on the feet can be used to treat the entire body. There is a lot of attention paid to the feet and legs in Thai massage, because getting energy moving in these areas helps to better connect the client to the earth, causing them to be more "grounded."

The traditional practitioner uses his/her hands, thumbs, fingers, elbows, forearms, knees and feet to stretch, balance and energize the recipient's body; manipulates the receiver into assisted hatha yoga positions and applies pressure to the marma pressure points along the energy lines.

The stretching used is passive, this means that the client does not participate in the stretching; the therapist does all the work. Stretching is done in stages with rest periods between, working gradually up to as much range of motion as possible. It is also done slowly to avoid the muscle shortening - or spasm - that can occur when a muscle is stretched too far, too fast.

The asanas, or postures, of hatha yoga are also included, to help the whole massage flow more smoothly. Like stretching, these are passive, performed by the therapist.

A typical Thai massage is much longer than a "regular" massage, lasting up to three hours. Also, all Thai massage is done with the client lying on a floor mat; this is such an active massage for the practitioner that a massage table would make it difficult or impossible to perform some of the techniques.

Due to its complex and thorough nature, the benefits of Thai Massage can't possibly be fully described. The benefits of Thai massage include those of regular massage, like improved circulation, mobility and flexibility, as well as stress relief. But Thai massage goes further; its more specialized techniques will help promote balance of all the body's systems.

Holistic Benefits of Traditional Thai Massage

Facilitates relaxation

SACRED BODYWORK

Heightens awareness

Increases energy/ Restores vitality

Frees blockages in energy flow

Invigorates the nervous system

Relieves pain and muscle tension

Increases range of motion in joints

Increases circulation/ Improves circulation of blood and lymph

Assists posture and alignment

Increases ability to absorb nutrition

Strengthens and rejuvenates the body

Increases flexibility (passive yoga postures)

Gives a general feeling of well being assisting in balancing body, mind, and spirit.

Enhances elimination of wastes and toxic debris from physical, mental and emotional strain

Thai massage can be particularly helpful in relieving: headaches, migraines, arthritis, whiplash pain, paralysis, numbness, sciatica, back pain and other conditions. Overall Thai Massage deeply relaxes the body and mind, reconnects the energy of the mind, body, and spirit; provides a meditative experience to combat today's hectic lifestyle and last, but not least, creates a lasting feeling of well-being

