

Check Out Chair Massage

You Deserve a Break in Your Busy Day

Cathy Ulrich

Ever been curious about the chair massage area at the mall? Or wondered why your company offers massages in the conference room on certain days? Does it seem strange people want to get massages in an odd-looking chair during a busy workday? Well, maybe they're on to something. In fact, a small investment in a chair massage session can lead to a significant pay-off.

Chair massage--also called seated or on-site massage--provides a host of benefits, including reducing stress, improving mental clarity, and enhancing work performance. And the time investment is minimal: short five-, ten- or fifteen-minute sessions can often do the trick.

During the Work Day

In short, this study shows what chair massage enthusiasts have known for some time: even a short massage can help relax tight muscles and remind the body to breathe. Although full-body massages are optimal, taking time out for one in the middle of the workday can lull you to sleep, and it can be difficult to schedule it into your day. On the other hand, a chair massage during an afternoon break may be a better alternative, particularly when you need to be energized, so you can better focus for late-day meetings or evening responsibilities. Besides, the short massage session time--often the same as your coffee break--keeps you from



Productivity increase and stress reduction are both benefits of chair massage in the office.

In a study done at the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami, researchers found that when participants got a fifteen-minute chair massage just twice a week, their anxiety levels were lower, their brain waves proved they were more relaxed and alert, and their stress levels were measurably reduced. The study also showed improved speed and accuracy on math computations.

stressing about being away from work too long.

You don't have to undress, you don't need the privacy of a table massage, and you're ready to get back to work feeling refreshed.

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*At the height of
laughter, the
universe is
flung into a
kaleidoscope of
new
possibilities.*

-Jean Houston

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Chair massage can also be a great introduction into the world of bodywork. If you've always wondered why some people are adamant about getting massages, or if you've been trying to explain to a friend or coworker why bodywork is so wonderful, chair massage is an excellent way to get a sampling.

The Massage Chair

The key to comfort for on-site massages is the specially tailored chair. It's important you feel fully supported and at ease so you can relax for your session. With pads to support your face, chest, arms, pelvis, and knees, a massage chair is surprisingly comfortable. And the chair's design puts you in a position that relieves tension even before the therapist starts working.

Massage chairs are fully adjustable so your practitioner can tailor the chair specifically to your body with just the release of a few levers. The unique design allows your therapist to easily access areas on your body--such as the neck, shoulders, and back--that may be the tightest.

Is It Effective?

You may wonder how a massage can be effective when the practitioner works through your clothes and without oils.

Chair massage has its roots in a centuries-old Japanese massage technique called amma. A predecessor to the better-known shiatsu, amma is done while seated, and therapists are trained to work specifically on the body's pressure points. Pressure point work, especially on the areas made accessible by the position of the massage chair, can free muscles and relieve stress and tight tissues without working directly on the skin. Therapists are skilled at palpating and working through clothes. In minutes, you feel relaxed, alert, and comfortable as your tension melts away. And, since no oils or lotions are used for chair massage, you can go right back to your day without feeling like you need to shower.

Your Trouble Spots

Once you decide how long you want your chair massage session to last, your therapist will adjust the routine for maximum effectiveness. These sessions can be very beneficial in treating

work-related issues, such as repetitive stress conditions and muscle tightness caused from sitting in front of a computer.

Be sure to tell your massage therapist of specific concerns you have, such as carpal tunnel syndrome or shoulder or neck stiffness. Your practitioner may suggest a longer session for your next visit to fully address your needs.

What's the Cost?

Chair massage is an economical bodywork option because the sessions are relatively short.

Typically, a therapist charges about a dollar a minute. While tipping is common practice, practitioners do not automatically expect it. Chair massage enthusiasts will tell you \$15 is an excellent investment in your health--and it feels great.

Talk To Your Employer

More and more companies are offering chair massages for their employees. Increased productivity and employee appreciation are just a couple of the benefits acknowledged by management. Some companies pay for the services, while others provide space for chair massage and employees pick up their own tabs.

If your company doesn't already offer chair massage, ask your human resources director if it's possible to bring this service into the office. Whether your employer pays for it or you do, you win, because you're able to make it through a stressful week a little more relaxed.

If you encounter a chair massage opportunity at work, at a local fair, or grocery store, do yourself a favor and sign up. You'll be happy you did.



The specially designed massage chair allows practitioners to access chronically tense areas.

Managing Arthritis

Exercise and Bodywork Keep Joint Pain at Bay

The word arthritis strikes fear in the hearts of older adults. It often signifies aging, pain, inactivity, and disability. However, new research shows moderate physical exercise can actually ease arthritis symptoms by decreasing pain and increasing a person's likelihood of living a normal life.

Understanding Arthritis

The most common form of arthritis--osteoarthritis, or also known as degenerative arthritis--affects more than twenty million Americans. Osteoarthritis (literally meaning "bone-joint inflammation") is caused by wear and tear on joint surfaces and most frequently involves the hips, knees, lower back, neck, and fingers. More than half of people over sixty-five have some evidence of osteoarthritis on X-rays, although it doesn't always manifest as symptoms.

Many problems arise from a sedentary lifestyle. Joints lose flexibility and muscles lose strength, feeding the cycle of pain, inactivity, and more pain.

Exercise Offers Sweet Relief

Vigorous walking, swimming, and bicycling boost the release of powerful endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. When done four to five days a week, these aerobic activities improve general cardiovascular health and aid in weight management (obesity is the single biggest risk factor for osteoarthritis).

Strengthening and stretching exercises targeted at maintaining joint flexibility and muscle strength--especially for at-risk joints--slow the progression of degenerative arthritis. Yoga classes and moderate weight lifting programs are excellent ways to improve strength and flexibility. Bodywork can also provide relief.

If arthritis is slowing you down, get serious with your exercise plan. Consult your physician; work with a professional trainer, physical therapist, yoga instructor, or bodyworker; and start a gentle, progressive exercise program. Your joints will reward you for it, and you'll free yourself from arthritic pain.



Stretching can slow degenerative arthritis.

The Appropriate Portion

Small Diet Modifications Can Mean Big Changes

Dropping a few extra pounds may mean reversing the voice in your head that sounds suspiciously like your mother telling you to clean your plate. Here's why: eating just one hundred extra daily calories--which may come from finishing everything on your plate, even after you're full--can represent ten added pounds in a year. Conversely, and fortunately, reducing your daily intake by just a small amount can help you manage and even lose weight. Following are a few portion control tips to help you meet your goals.

Eat at Home

Dine in, and fill your own plate. Studies show that most people serve themselves smaller portions at home, but eat more when someone else fills their plate.

Restaurant portions have grown significantly in recent years, in some cases doubling, and research has directly tied obesity with regular dining out. When you dine at home, serve yourself only what you think you can comfortably eat. Store leftovers in individual serving containers, and freeze them or take them for lunch the next day.

Slow Down

Pay attention to how fast you're eating. Slowing down helps you eat less and better recognize when you're full. When you dine out, ask your server for a box. If you continue to pick at your plate while talking with friends, you'll soon eat the whole thing without even thinking about it. This mindless eating can account for a lot of calories.

Divvy up Dinner

Sharing an entree with your dining partner and ordering an extra salad is a great way to avoid eating a large meal. If you're traveling and dining alone, try an appetizer and salad.

You've heard the reports: Obesity is one of the greatest risk factors for heart disease, degenerative arthritis, and cancer, and it's now epidemic in the United States with an alarming 66 percent of all adults obese.

The good news is watching your portions, slowing down, and being mindful of the food you consume can make a difference. Even your mother would agree, you don't always need to clean your plate.

*We make a
living by what
we get, we make
a life by what we
give.*

-Winston Churchill

I do offer on-site chair massage for the workplace, spa party, or event. For details, please contact me at goodhealthmt@aol.com or 720-331-6769.

March Skier "special hours": I will be working these Saturdays in order to free up some Tuesdays to capitalize on Spring skiing. Saturdays: March 3, 17, and 31 are open. Call 720-331-6769 to make your appointment.

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