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Fitness-related Benefits of Massage

By Jon Gestl

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Ask someone their reason for getting a massage and you're likely to hear "because it feels good". We all know that a massage can relieve stress, help to make sore muscles feel better and even reduce anxiety, but can it help us achieve our fitness goals? Research shows that the massage you get to relieve stress can also have a positive effect on your muscle-building capabilities and fitness level.

1. Massage improves circulation and general nutrition of muscles. This appears to be the most valuable fitness-related benefit. Massage is accompanied or followed by an increase interchange of substances between the blood the tissue cells, which increases tissue metabolism. After a muscle is exercised, vital nutrients must be supplied in order for it to increase in size. Massage maximizes the supply of nutrients and oxygen though increased blood flow, which helps the body rebuild itself.
2. Massage improves the range of motion and muscle flexibility. This results in increased power and performance, which helps you work efficiently and with proper intensity to facilitate the body's muscle-building response.
3. Massage helps to shorten recovery time between workouts. Waste products such as lactic and carbonic acid build up in muscles after exercise. Increased circulation to these muscles help to eliminate toxic debris and shorten recovery time.
4. Massage can help prevent over-training. Massage has a relaxing effect on the muscles, as well as a sedative effect on the nervous system. This can prevent over-training syndrome which has limiting effect on muscle building.
5. Massage may aid in fat loss. According to some research, massage may burst the fat capsule in subcutaneous tissue so that the fat exudes and becomes absorbed. In this way, combined with proper nutrition, massage may help in weight loss.

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6. Massage helps prevent and even heal injuries. By stretching connective tissue, massage improves circulation to help prevent or break down adhesions. Massage also influences the excretion of certain fluids (nitrogen, phosphorous, sulfur) necessary for tissue repair.

While a massage won't build muscle directly, it helps to facilitate the body's rebuilding phase following a workout and influences muscular growth. Getting a massage is just as important as regular workouts and supportive nutrition for a comprehensive fitness program. Great news for those of us who thought building a great body was all hard work!

Before making an appointment with the first massage therapist you encounter, however, be sure they are a qualified bodywork practitioner. Ask for referrals, professional training information, and certification credentials from a reputable agency, such as the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB).

Jon Gestl, CSCS, is a Chicago personal trainer and fitness instructor who specializes in helping people get in shape in the privacy and convenience of their home or office. He is a United States National Aerobic Champion silver and bronze medalist and world-ranked sportaerobic competitor and editor of the fitness ezine "Inspired Informed and Inshape." He can be contacted through his website at

The Benefits Of Infant Massage

By Anne Morris

Most mothers instinctively lovingly massage their babies. Perhaps it was by understanding this and observing the effect upon the infant that the idea of infant massage was born. Actually infant massage has been in practice for many years. But recently its popularity has taken off worldwide. It should really come as no surprise since both babies and parents enjoy the benefits. Let's take a look at some of the benefits of infant massage below:

Infant Massage Facilitates Bonding

Touch between mother and baby is extremely important during the early months in order to develop the bond that will help the baby thrive and grow into a happy well adjusted child. The mother and father are able to provide gentle nurturing touches which the baby associates with love and being cared for. Infant massage helps the baby and parents get to know one another and spend quiet quality time together, communicating through touch.

Infant Massage Relaxes the Infant

A newborn baby's life is pretty stressful when you think about it. He gets hungry and cold and the only way he can let anyone know he needs attention is to yell for it. Infant massage can help relax a stressed out baby that has just had too much activity or is suffering from stomach upsets. When infant massage is part of the baby's normal routine, there is a good chance he will grow into a child who knows what relaxation is and how to achieve it to escape the stresses of life.

Fitness–related Benefits of Massage

Infant Massage Improves Baby's Sleep

It follows that a baby lulled into relaxation by an infant massage will quickly succumb to slumber. The upside is that infant massage may help to promote sounder and longer sleep periods. Parents will also benefit from a soundly sleeping baby which will give them much needed rest also.

Infant Massage Supports Communication

Infant massage opens up a new channel for communication among baby and parents. Parents will learn to pick up on nonverbal cues from the baby. The infant will grow to feel as if he is being heard and attended to without having to clamor for it.

Infant Massage Relieves Discomfort

Studies indicate that infant massage releases endorphins and oxytocin into the baby's body. These elements may act to relieve the common discomforts a baby struggles with such as teething, stress, congestion, and colic. Watch any mother trying to comfort an unhappy baby as massage, rubbing, and patting just come naturally. The movements help to settle the child, relax him, and alleviate his discomfort.

Infant Massage is Fun

What better reason could there be for infant massage other than the simple fact that the baby and parents think it is fun? It is a great way to get some giggles and coos from the baby and have an enjoyable time together.

So given the above benefits, it is no wonder that infant massage is so popular. Of course mothers have been massaging their babies since the beginning of time, but when we speak of the formal infant massage you should know there is actually a method to follow. Certain types of movements act to calm and relax the baby before bedtime and other types of movements will energize him. Still other types of massage movements act to relieve discomfort. So if you would like to learn formal massage for your baby and experience the benefits above, ask around and see if you can find a local infant massage class that you and your baby can attend together.

Anne Morris is an established freelance writer. You can find more of her writings at

and

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