



# Staying in Touch®

The majority of people first see a massage therapist because of some physical pain. One of the most common complaints is back pain. This issue's feature article gives you some information about this condition and caring for your back.

As a therapist, it's very rewarding to help someone overcome a painful condition so they can enjoy life pain-free once more. It's also very gratifying to work with a client on a regular basis to focus on *maintaining* a healthy body.

Massage offers so many benefits to help your body function at its best. I find the clients that enjoy the greatest gains from massage are those who make it a regular part of their lives.

For many, modern day living can be very stressful. Make sure you take a little time for yourself to relax and unwind. And the best way to thoroughly "de-stress" yourself is with a therapeutic massage session.

I'll look forward to seeing you soon—take care!

## Oh, My Aching Back!

Maintaining a healthy back is vital to your overall health. As your own "information super highway" runs through your spinal cord—sending messages that affect every aspect of your health—you want to do everything possible to facilitate its proper function.

An ancient adage from Yoga states "*You are as young as your spine is flexible.*" We have all seen a younger person with back pain moving along like an octogenarian, or a supple senior citizen dancing as if she were still in her teens.

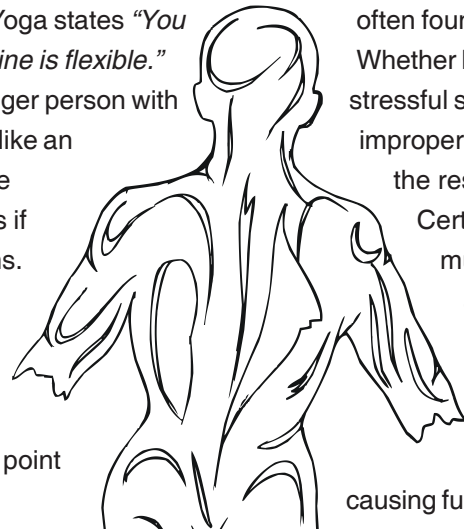
It is estimated that approximately 80 percent of us will experience back pain at some point in our lives. As the most common cause of discomfort and disability for people under forty-five, it is also the main reason people miss work, second only to the common cold. Anyone who has had a serious bout with back pain knows how debilitating it can be.

Several things can precipitate back pain, among them tension, trauma or strain; improper sleeping positions; and sedentary lifestyles (lots of sitting, desk jobs, etc.). Pregnancy often is accompanied by back pain due to the added weight the mother-to-be carries in her lower abdomen. If you find your back starting to act up, being aware of potential problems and seeking to correct them is an excellent first step.

If your job requires you to sit at your desk a good part of the time, you may find quick relief in getting up frequently. An exercise regime including stretching, swimming, walking, or weight training also proves helpful in dealing with back pain.

In today's bustling world, tension is often found to be the culprit. Whether brought about by stressful situations, poor posture, improper body alignment, etc., the result is the same.

Certain muscles tense (the muscle fibers contract) and fail to relax properly. When this occurs in the back, it can begin to affect the body structurally, causing further problems.

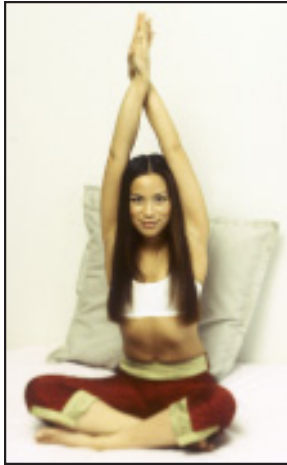


Another typical source of back pain is muscle strain. When you overexert a back muscle, it can seize up in an effort to protect itself from further injury.

The good news is that most back pain can be prevented by keeping the muscles and joints supple and mobile, greatly aided through regular massage sessions. Through its stretching and relaxing strokes, massage is quite effective for restoring the normal range of motion and for easing muscle spasms. Sometimes a deeper massage is employed to release areas of chronic tension and to increase blood circulation to the area. Let's work together to keep *your* back happy!

# Stretching for Better Mobility

We've all heard the saying, "Use it or lose it." It's all too easy to lose your flexibility over the years through lack of activity. And since many physical changes happen so gradually, one day you find yourself wondering where your mobility went.



ing. Physically, a muscle has some give and take from its normal "at rest" position. According to exercise physiologist Linda DiCarlo at Georgia Tech University in Atlanta, when a muscle clenches, tiny fibers within it slide past one another like interlocking fingers. When it stretches, the fibers loosen their grip and slide back the other way. When used past their comfort point, muscles remain in a semi-contracted state.

Regular stretching exercises can ease the tightness that limits range of motion. But be patient! Just as these changes happen very gradually over the years, you should allow yourself plenty of time to begin correcting these trouble areas.

Your regular massage sessions also contribute to improving your range of motion and keeping you limber and lithe. If you would like more information regarding stretching, please be sure to ask at your next session.

This lack of movement leads to an achy tightness in those unused muscle groups. As one group of muscles goes unused, your body begins to change position (picture someone with poor posture) and another set of muscles reacts by becoming tighter. Without proper use, your body tends to adjust more permanently to this new position, further restricting your range of motion.

Another cause of tightness is through overuse of a muscle or muscle group. We've all experienced pushing ourselves beyond our limits of condition-

**Since pain is something we try to eliminate from our lives, you may be interested to know the word *pain* comes from the Latin word that means "penalty."**

***"We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden."*** —JOHANN VON GOETHE

**CHANGE A LIFE—INTRODUCE A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE TO THE BENEFITS OF MASSAGE!**

*The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.*