

# The Massage Monthly

April 2024

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## Age is a State of Mind

### Baby Boomers Combat Aging with Bodywork

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, preventing disease and injury is critical to reducing the expected growth of health-care costs headed our way, as more than 70 million U.S. baby boomers cross the 60-year-old threshold. Moreover, disease prevention is critical to, well, your health!

Whether you're a boomer who is running a marathon or running after your grandchildren, you know that growing older doesn't mean growing old. If you're wondering how to stave off the effects of aging, the preventative and restorative nature of massage and bodywork might be just what the body ordered.

and its elasticity, and toning muscle tissue. Massage also creates a stimulating cellular function in the hypodermis, dermis, and epidermis layers of the skin and increases the production of skin-nurturing sebum.

### Immunity and Stress

If you're already a frequent recipient of massage, you know what the work does to combat daily stress. But did you know how detrimental those stressors can be?

Experts say the majority of disease we encounter today is associated with stress. Not only that, stress is a huge factor in premature aging of the body. Researchers say chronic stress ages the

*Fear of disease keeps you away from health.*

-Dr. D



Massage therapy can play an important role in aging well and remaining youthful and healthy.

### Improved Circulation, Healthier Skin

As our bodies age, our circulation slows and our skin loses its once youthful vitality. Experts say the mechanical nature of massage combats these effects by increasing circulation through the manipulation of tissue, improving the appearance and condition of the skin

body, weakens immune cell function, and can make cells appear up to 17 years older than they really are. Through its effects, massage deftly attacks stress, while boosting the immune system. Massage encourages the release of oxytocin, a stress-reducing hormone in the body most often associated with

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#### Office Hours and Contact

218-263-1501  
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Spring Office Hours  
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Fridays: 9am-1:30pm

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birth and bonding, and activates the parasympathetic nervous system and its relaxation response. Massage also decreases beta brainwave activity, increases dopamine and serotonin levels in the body, and reduces cortisol levels, all of which are linked to decreased stress.

## Squashing the Pain

Part of the aging process, unfortunately, involves dealing with aches and pains. You might find a day of gardening brings on back pain you never experienced before, or your biking regimen now requires greater recovery time afterward. Even though pain is a constant source of grief for an aging body, massage can make a difference.

The passive movement in massage keeps joints more mobile and stimulates the synovial fluid, which lubricates the joints and nourishes the articular cartilage. Massage also prompts the release of endorphins and other pain-reducing neurochemicals.

In addition to the pains of physical exertion an aging body experiences, the discomfort caused by arthritis can be just as debilitating. Experts predict that one-third of Americans will get arthritis as they age. Ironically, most arthritis sufferers may not think of massage when they start to explore which therapies might ease their pain. While it is doubtful an arthritic joint can "heal" completely with massage, it can feel better. And for an arthritis sufferer, better is a welcome word, particularly when there are no side effects involved.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, an increasing number of doctors are recommending massage to their arthritis patients to help relieve the pain and stiffness caused by their disease. Massage can increase circulation around painful joints, bringing healing oxygen and nutrients, including amino acids, to rebuild tissue. Many massage therapists report that their arthritic clients find better and longer-lasting relief from massage than from pharmaceuticals.

Whether its reducing the symptoms of arthritis, or simply addressing the aches and pains of living an active life, massage can play an important role in aging well.

## Bennies for Boomers

The benefits from massage and bodywork can help bodies of all ages, especially for baby boomers. Research has shown that massage:

- Improves range of motion and decreases low-back pain.
- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles.
- Reduces swelling and scar tissue.
- Reduces recovery time from injury/surgery.
- Reduces stress, a major contributor to disease and ill health.
- Releases endorphins, the body's natural painkiller, thereby reducing the need for medications.
- Stimulates lymph flow and supports the body's natural process of detoxification.

## Psychological Value

In addition to all the physical benefits massage and bodywork offers, there also are proven psychological changes we experience with massage. One of the reasons massage feels so relaxing is that there is a literal psychological benefit as dopamine and serotonin become balanced in the system. And when massage produces oxytocin in the body, there is a sense of being nurtured. Add that to the restorative effect that comes from those quiet moments during massage, and you've got a process that experts say is incredibly healing.

Aging, obviously, is a process none of us can avoid. As Benjamin Franklin said, "When you're finished changing, you're finished." Turn the inevitability of aging into a positive process of change and let massage and bodywork help you along the journey.



The aches and pains that often accompany the aging process can be managed with bodywork.

# Enzyme Power

*Lisa VanBockern*

As we age, natural exfoliation can take up to 40 days or more, which leads to a buildup of dead skin cells. This means fine lines, uneven skin tone, and in some cases, acne. Incorporating natural fruit enzymes into your skin care regimen is a great way to clean, correct, and polish the skin, as well as deliver nutrition to skin cells.

## Good-Bye Dead Skin

In the late 1800s, papain (found in unripe papaya) was first explored and recognized as an enzyme useful in digesting protein. This makes papaya useful for light exfoliation, as it operates in a way that's similar to digestive enzymes breaking down food in the stomach; it digests dead skin to reveal fresh, healthy cells.

## Fruit Antioxidants

Fruit enzymes also offer antioxidant benefits to the skin. To visualize oxidation, think of an apple that's been cut and left out in the open. It turns brown. Yet, if you squeeze a lemon over

the apple right after slicing it, it stays fresh and looks more appetizing. While we wouldn't want lemon juice (at 100 percent L-ascorbic acid) on our skin, we do want the benefits of a more gentle, buffered substance to stabilize pH and control acidity. Products including fruits like blueberry, kiwi, lemon, pomegranate, and pumpkin provide great antioxidant nutrition to the skin.

## Stay Hydrated

Natural enzymes in the epidermis require water, since water regulates almost every enzymatic action. This raises interesting questions: Do you drink enough water? Do you live in a dry climate or other environment where trans-epidermal water loss is great? If there is not enough water among skin cells, natural enzymes will not kick in. Adding water to your diet will further enhance enzymatic activity.

*Lisa VanBockern is founder and owner of Skin Script Skin Care of Tempe, Arizona. She is a formulator of corrective fruit enzyme products and*

*educates on that topic. Her esthetic focus has been on corrective skin treatments for all ethnicities.*



**Finding products with natural fruit enzymes can boost**

# Rhamnose

## All sugars are not created equal

*Shelley Burns*

Sugar is often at the center of a lot of negative press. It is not uncommon to hear news of its detrimental effects each week--childhood obesity, diabetes, and behavioral disorders, to name a few. We even talk about the negative effects of sugar in the world of skin care, as it is known to cause glycation, a metabolic process that weakens the collagen and elastin responsible for plumping up our skin, leading to wrinkles and premature aging.

Not all sugar is created equally, however. In fact, one form of sugar--rhamnose--has intriguing skin benefits.

Rhamnose is a sugar derived from the cat's claw plant (*Uncaria tomentosa*). Scientific studies have shown that topical application of rhamnose stimulates

collagen production and thickens the epidermis, both in lab tests and in human trials. Rhamnose also has soothing and anti-inflammatory properties as an added bonus--fascinating, and certainly counterintuitive to everything else we know about sugar.

Rhamnose does not act at all like sucrose (ordinary table sugar) in the body. Sucrose is one of the so-called "fast sugars," along with dextrose, glucose, fructose, maltodextrin, and products made from them, such as corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, and invert syrup. All of these fast sugars contribute to a higher incidence of obesity and diabetes. Instead, rhamnose can play a role in ensuring proper cell and metabolic functions in the body--most importantly, allowing for regeneration

of the skin. Recently, skin care companies have taken rhamnose to the next level by including it in antiaging skin care products.

In addition to rhamnose, cat's claw has other immune-stimulating properties. It is used to treat arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome, and may also inhibit tumor cell formation. Pregnant women should avoid using cat's claw, though, as it can increase the risk of miscarriage.

*Shelley Burns, a doctor of naturopathic medicine, completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, and has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.*

*The 'i' in illness  
is isolation, and  
the crucial  
letters in  
wellness is 'we'.*

-Author Unknown

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