

# Keeping Yourself Healthy with Massage

By Allyson Madere, Licensed Massage Therapist

## 1. Reduce Pain.

Massage creates chemical changes that reduce pain and stress throughout the body. One way it does this is by reducing a brain chemical called substance P that is related to pain. In a Touch Research Institute study, for example, individuals with a form of muscle pain called fibromyalgia showed less substance P in their saliva (and they reported reduced pain) after a month of twice-weekly massages.

## 2. De-Stress, Stay Healthy.

Massage may boost immunity. Several studies have measured the stress hormone called cortisol in subjects' saliva before and after massage sessions, and found dramatic decreases. Cortisol, which is produced when you are stressed, kills cells important for immunity, so when massage reduces your stress levels and hence the cortisol in your body, it may help you avoid getting a cold or another illness while under stress.

## 3. Blood Pressure Benefits.

Massage reduces hypertension, suggests a good deal of research. This may be because it stimulates pressure receptors that prompt action from the vagus nerve, one of the nerves that emerge from the brain. The vagus nerve regulates blood pressure, as well as other functions. In a 2005 study at the University of South Florida, hypertension patients who received 10 massages of 10 minutes each over three weeks showed significant improvements in blood pressure compared to a control group who simply rested in the same environment without any massage.

Take one step closer towards your keeping yourself healthy and reaching your fitness goals with massage. Our therapists are available throughout the week, appointments can be made at the Sports Desk or online.

