

A Touch of Vitality

FEB 10

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Thai Massage

Movement and Massage Makes for a Unique Experience

A slow dance--that's how many have described the ancient work known as Thai massage, a modality that incorporates the tenets of yoga with massage and mindfulness. Accessible for just about everyone, Thai massage relies on the partnership between client and practitioner to facilitate therapeutic movement.

Historical Roots

Developed more than 2,000 years ago in Thailand, Thai massage remains a popular technique that incorporates aspects of yoga, acupressure, energy balancing, and massage. Considered one of the ancient healing arts of traditional Thai medicine (which also included

Pho monastery in Bangkok. Today, Thai massage continues to be a mainstay in Thai medicine, while quickly gaining a new audience in the Western world.

What is Thai Massage?

Also known as yoga massage, assisted yoga, ancient massage, and assorted other names, Thai massage respects the body's limits, while encouraging clients to reach their edge of flexibility, but never beyond. Thai massage incorporates acupressure, massage, and passive-assisted stretching, where therapists help clients move into their stretch. The work is purposely slow as the therapist guides clients through the movements, being ever mindful of their

*A wise man
ought to realize
that health is
his most
valuable
possession.*

-Hippocrates



Performed on a floor mat, Thai massage encompasses acupressure, massage, and stretching.

herbal practice, nutrition, and spiritual meditation), Thai massage was originally passed from teacher to teacher within the Buddhist temples, while Thai families used it as a healing folk art. Unfortunately, much of the history of Thai massage was lost during the Burmese invasion of Thailand in 1767, although some of the traditions remain inscribed on the stone walls of the Wat

physical limitations. Some say the combination of movements and focused awareness during a Thai massage session creates what looks like a slow, flowing dance between practitioner and client.

Thai massage is based on an energetic paradigm of the human body and mind.

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Office Hours and Contact

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In this tradition, energy is thought to travel on pathways, called sen, throughout the body. The specific points of energy along those pathways are called nadis. Through movement and massage components, the goal in Thai massage is to ensure energy is flowing freely along these pathways as a means for wellness.

Unlike traditional massage, Thai massage is performed on a soft floor mat. It can be adapted to a massage table, however, for the more frail and elderly. Clients are clothed in loose, comfortable attire suitable for the deep stretching that will be part of the session. This interactive form of bodywork can utilize tai chi, rocking and rhythmic motion, massage, and assisted stretching. Don't be surprised if practitioners use their hands, feet, knees, elbows, and legs to facilitate the process; pillows and bolsters may also be used for better client support. No oil is used during these sessions; however heated, herbal compresses are often incorporated to enhance movement and warm the muscles.

Exploring the Benefits of Thai Massage

As with traditional massage, Thai massage offers numerous benefits:

- Deep relaxation.
- Quieting of the mind.
- Heightened energy levels.
- Improved circulation.
- Improved lymphatic flow.
- Improved range of motion.
- Increased flexibility.
- Rejuvenated body and mind.
- Relief for pain and muscle tension.
- Enhanced body-mind connection.

Experts say there is an interesting dichotomy that exists within Thai massage, as it both relaxes and rejuvenates. After a session, some Thai massage clients report feeling awakened and energized, while simultaneously feeling deeply grounded and at peace.

The Yoga Component

Recipients of Thai massage can also capture the well-established benefits of yoga without actually doing yoga. As the practitioner gently moves clients into yoga-like poses, tight joints are opened, energy flows freely, and breathing is enhanced. A meditative state becomes

part of the process, as both client and practitioner focus on breath and intention.

Through the assisted stretches, clients' muscles become less prone to injury, their joints have a greater range of motion, and their whole body enjoys greater flexibility. In addition to its acceptance among nurses, massage therapists, bodyworkers, and physical therapists, many yoga enthusiasts are finding that Thai massage adds a whole new dimension to their practice.

Conversely, if you're wanting to explore yoga but may be intimidated or not sure where to begin, Thai massage is a great introduction. It can give you a sense of how yoga works with the body, how it's practiced, and how the body will respond. Your practitioner may also be able to recommend yoga classes suited for your needs.

Communication is Key

As with any form of massage or bodywork, it's paramount that Thai massage clients communicate with their therapists throughout the session. Is the massage pressure too deep? Does the stretch no longer feel good? Is the room too hot? Be sure to let the therapist know if something is not quite right so he or she can deliver the best, most therapeutic work possible and you can experience the full benefits of your Thai massage session.

Young or old, healthy or frail, Thai massage offers something for everyone. Whether you're a weekend warrior needing to work out the aches and pains of excess, or a retiree needing to awaken and invigorate an aging body through movement and stretching, the therapeutic nature of Thai massage can address your needs.



The therapist guides the client through the movements in a slow, flowing, yoga-type dance.

Prevent the Afternoon Slump

Some Tips for P.M. Energy

Jerry V. Teplitz

If you're like most people, you've experienced the afternoon slump. You know the feeling -- it's only 2 p.m., yet you feel drained. Fortunately, you can employ methods to reduce the slump's frequency and shorten its duration.

DRINK WATER.

Your body uses water even if you're not exercising. If you wait until you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Keep a water bottle handy all day.

AVOID SUGAR AND SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES.

While a mid-afternoon candy bar may give you a quick rush, it actually worsens the slump. Instead, choose protein-rich foods and complex carbs.

EAT SMALL MEALS.

Have six small meals over the course of the day instead of three large ones. Big meals cause the digestive process to divert blood from your brain to use in the digestive track.

EVALUATE YOUR LIGHTING.

Most offices are lit with cool, white

fluorescent tubes, which have a terrible effect on how people feel and function at work. A better option is full-spectrum, fluorescent tubes.

TAKE TIME FOR WALKS.

Walking gets your blood circulating, helps you breathe better, and stimulates your brain due to the increased blood flow. Take a 5- or 10-minute walk during the day.

MEDITATE.

Meditation is great for rejuvenating your body. By meditating for 15 to 20 minutes twice a day, you're keeping your body continually energized and rested.

TAKE TIME TO BREATHE AND STRETCH.

Deep breathing exercises give you an energy boost. Also, stand up and stretch to increase blood flow and stimulate the lymphatic system.

HANDLE NEGATIVITY.

Negative people and images can have a draining effect on your energy. Make a conscious effort to stay positive.



Avoid the drain office settings can bring on.

Hibernating is for the Bears

Plan to Stay Fit This Winter

Winter's here, and you've moved your running shoes to the back of the closet until April. Yet that piece of pumpkin pie has your name on it.

With the onset of colder weather, shorter days, and snow-covered streets, we eat more and exercise less, waiting for the spring thaw to get back in shape. Instead of having to make New Year's resolutions to lose holiday weight and join a health club, why not set goals to stay fit this winter?

MOVE FITNESS INDOORS

Winter is the perfect time to start a weight-training program. When it's sunny and warm in summer, you'd rather be outside cycling or rock climbing. When it's snowing, why not

lift weights for 30 minutes during lunch? Statistics show that more people suffer heart attacks in winter from shoveling snow, often because they're out of shape. With regular strength training, you'll be able to shovel that snow and get a head start with outdoor sports when spring comes around.

WALK OUTSIDE ON WEEKENDS

Going for a jog or walk during mid-day when the sun is high is a great time to get outside and catch a few rays. Be sure to dress warmly, wear sunscreen, and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is most common in colder months when you're less aware of fluid loss.

TAKE A DANCE CLASS

Accept that invitation to the New Year's

Eve celebration and take a class in ballroom dancing. While you're dancing, you're not hanging around the buffet table or the bar, and your waistline will thank you for it.

REDISCOVER ICE SKATING

Whether it's on a frozen pond or at a rink, ice skating provides seasonal exercise opportunities, especially good for the legs. And it's great fun, bringing out the kid in all of us.

CONSIDER SNOWSHOEING

Snowshoeing is just a matter of strapping snowshoes onto your boots and walking. Snowshoes make hiking trails and snowy city parks accessible and can be rented from sporting goods stores at a relatively inexpensive price.

The treatments themselves do not 'cure' the condition, they simply restore the body's self-healing ability.

-Leon Chaitow, N.D.

Now that football season is out of the way, you have even more time for massage.

It isn't just the lucky who get massages. You can too! Choose to treat your body well. Schedule an appointment or just get a gift certificate. [http://vitalkneads.net!](http://vitalkneads.net)

Therapeutically yours,
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