Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Gradually the medical community is recognizing that hands on therapy can help alleviate symptoms of osteoarthritis and other medical conditions.

**Touch**

Touch is the main ingredient of massage. If done correctly it gets the nervous system to relax. Pain is perceived by the nervous system. A lot of times you get great pain relief if you can get the nervous system to relax.

Massage isn’t a simple back rub. It can do more harm than good if not done correctly and in the wrong hands. It also needs to be coordinated with patients’ other therapies.

**Why does massage work?**

When your body senses pain in an arthritic joint, it tightens the surrounding muscles, fascia and other tissues to protect the joint.

Massage can loosen up tissues and break up adhesions that restrict movement. Massage such as gentle joint stretching can stimulate production of synovial fluid, which cushions the joint. Massage causes the release of natural painkilling endorphins and increases blood flow to aid in healing.

Obviously massage can’t cure osteoarthritis. Results can vary from person to person. It can however be effective when used as an adjunct to medical and physical therapy.

Massage doesn’t repair the joint, but you can definitely see less muscle spasm and pain over time.

**The right form of Massage**

Massage therapy has an array of styles. Some work better than others for arthritis.

Most people are familiar with massage and know what full-body deep tissue massage is. This is not recommended for most arthritis patients. Massaging too deeply can create inflammation, leaving the patient too sore to move freely and leaving the joints stiffer than before.

Reiki touch therapy and gentle massage are preferred for arthritis patients. Neuromuscular therapy and myofascial release can improve the tone of muscles and range of motion of joints.

**Home treatment**

Massage therapists can teach patients self massage techniques to relieve their pain at home.

**How to proceed**

- Find a certified massage therapist experienced in the treatment of arthritis.
- Make sure the therapist knows your medical history and medications, especially narcotic pain medications and blood thinners such as Coumadin.
- Make sure your doctor and physical therapist are aware of what each is doing.
- Massage therapy works best and longest if done regularly. It’s best to check on the expense and whether your insurance covers massage if prescribed by your doctor.
Massage therapists are licensed through the American Massage Therapy Association, www.amtamassage.org.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*

**Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website.**

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every GCH article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush