

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Massage For Arthritis Pain

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Last time I spent a lot of time on how walking is good for arthritis.

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.

Thanks for being in the Argus Orthopaedic Zone. It is a good place to be for learning things that are important for you to know.

All the information I have given you in these articles has been saved and each and every article will be soon available on our new and improved website www.orthopodsurgeon.com and Your Orthopaedic Connection. It contains a ton of information about all the things I treat in the hospital and the office. Log on and check it out!

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush