



Staying in Touch®

A new season ...

... and a new reason to get your next massage! Much of the news on health lately has been focused on the spread of the latest strain of the swine flu. This issue covers how you can boost your immune system and improve your odds of avoiding illness.

Other steps you can take to stay healthy include providing yourself with a nutritious diet, drinking plenty of pure water to help flush toxins from your system, and getting an adequate amount of rest. A recent study indicated that getting at least seven hours of sleep each night reduces the likelihood of getting sick. (And studies show massage can help you to get better sleep.)

Some nutritionists recommend supporting your immune system by increasing your intake of probiotics (the good microorganisms that live in your intestinal tract), such as acidophilus. According to information found online at nih.gov, "Friendly bacteria are vital to proper development of the immune system, to protection against microorganisms that could cause disease, and to the digestion and absorption of food and nutrients."

Read the rest of this issue to see the many ways massage can support your immune system and keep you healthy!

Strengthen Your Immune System with Massage

Of massage's many benefits, one of the best is boosting your immune system. It's easy to take your health for granted until an illness takes hold. With an increased risk of a new flu strain lurking, this is an excellent time to do everything you can to support your immune system. And what better way than with a relaxing massage?

Understanding the basic functions of your immune system might help you appreciate what a remarkable job it performs. Virtually every cell in your body has specific molecules on its surface that identifies itself as being part of "you." This enables your immune system to differentiate between you and foreign organisms and to send its defensive team after any hostile invaders.

When a health threat has been identified, your body produces various substances to combat it. For instance, certain proteins (antibodies) will be deployed to attach themselves to the attackers to mark them for destruction. Various cells are present to devour certain infected cells, kill parasites, destroy cancer cells, and cope with allergens, while other immune responses occur that help to heal or defend the body.

Your immune system consists of an elaborate and complex network of trillions of white blood cells. Concentrations of these cells are found in your lymph nodes, tonsils, spleen, thymus, and bone marrow—on call to defend you 24 hours a day. You may be surprised to learn that the largest immunological organ in your body is your intestine, with 70%-80% of all

antibody-producing cells located in your digestive system.

A properly functioning immune system produces just enough response to handle the problem, then drops back to alert status. Just as you can have too little response (as from a weakened immune system), it is possible for your immune system to overreact. An overactive system may lead to conditions such as allergies or autoimmune conditions (like arthritis, lupus, insulin-dependent diabetes, psoriasis, fibromyalgia, or multiple sclerosis). These occur when the immune system confuses the body's own cells with invader cells and attacks its own tissues. So not only do

you need a strong immune system, you need one that is well-balanced.

Your immune system is tied to and affected by your emotional state—whether you are elated, angry, fatigued, or stressed. Stress actually decreases natural defenses resulting in less efficient and slower healing, and a greater susceptibility to infection.

So how does massage help your immune system?

"In one study after another, research is suggesting that massage therapy has a positive impact on immune function," said Diane Zeitlin, research associate at the Center for Research in Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Kessler Medical Rehabilitation and Education Corporation, West Orange, N.J.

See **Your Immune System ...** on back



Your Immune System ...

(Continued from front)

“An increase in white blood cells and natural killer-cell activity better prepares the body to fight off possible invading cells,” said Zeitlin. “These cellular changes suggest the immune system benefited from the massages, and these findings fall in line with previous research.”

In a study conducted by the Touch Research Institute (TRI) at the University of Miami on women who had been diagnosed with breast cancer, the women received regular massage therapy (three times a week for five weeks), with 80 percent showing improved immune function.

“These are the first studies that show an effect of massage therapy on an immune function test, which can support the use of massage therapy to alleviate stress, relax muscles and now possibly serve as an alternative medical practice,” said Michael Ruff, Ph.D., research associate professor at Georgetown University Medical School.”¹

So give your immune system some help this season with regular massage sessions! Call today to schedule your next appointment.

Source: 1. American Massage Therapy Assn.

Why is winter the flu season?

Scientists had long theorized that it was mostly because colder weather kept people indoors, where the close contact was more likely to spread the virus. But a new analysis puts the blame on the amount of humidity in the air. Looking at previous studies, climate physicist Jeffrey Shaman of Oregon State University found strong evidence that flu transmission peaks when absolute humidity—the pure percentage of water in the air—is lowest, during cold, dry winter days. “The correlations were surprisingly strong,” Shaman tells the Associated Press. The virus’ ability “to survive and be transmitted person-to-person is greatly affected by how dry or wet the air is.” To humidify your air at home and help ward off flu, you can buy a humidifier, or try Grandma’s low-tech trick: Allow a teakettle to boil on the stove for a while. —*The Week Vol 9 Issue 401*



**Give somebody a health boost
with a massage gift certificate!**

Call today to order ...

“What worries you, masters you.”

—John Locke

***“The chains of habit are too weak to be felt
until they are too strong to be broken.”***

—Samuel Johnson

The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.