

## Massage and Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is generally associated with achiness in the neck, trunk, and hips. Stiffness is felt in the morning, followed by fatigue and lethargy. Diagnosis is difficult because the symptoms are common to other conditions like fibrositis, myofascial pain or rheumatoid arthritis. Unlike other forms of inflammatory arthritis, Fibromyalgia can't be verified through blood tests or x-rays. These tests are important, though, in ruling out other causes or diseases. If you feel that you may have Fibromyalgia, it is crucial that you seek out the appropriate medical physician to ensure that there are no other causes for your symptoms.

Massage is a very important part of the treatment of Fibromyalgia. Therapeutic massage assists in the removal of waste from muscles, while increasing blood and nutrient flow. This results in a greater availability of oxygen to cells. Massage is particularly useful when starting an exercise program. Under the best of conditions, soreness after exercise can be expected. For someone with Fibromyalgia, increased soreness can serve to discourage further activity before benefits have been achieved. In the area of soreness reduction nothing works faster than massage. Properly administered joint stretching also helps reduce muscle pain and increases range of motion.

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### **People Sleep Better After Massage, Which Reduces Pain**

**By Jeanie Davis, WebMD Medical News**

**Reviewed By Michael Smith, MD May 9, 2002**

Many fibromyalgia symptoms: pain, stiffness, fatigue, depression can be relieved with massage therapy. Now, researchers say they understand why. Massage alters the sleep pattern, which reduces levels of the chemical messenger for pain. Fibromyalgia affects approximately 3-6 million people in the U.S., mostly women, according to lead author Tiffany Field, PhD, a researcher with the Touch Research Institutes in Miami. It causes widespread muscle and soft tissue pain, tenderness, and fatigue. A person with fibromyalgia will experience pain when "trigger points" are pressed. Previous studies have shown that exercise, stretching, relaxation therapy, and massage therapy can provide relief for people with fibromyalgia. Massage therapy has also been shown to reduce pain, stiffness, fatigue, and sleeping difficulties. But researchers have not known exactly what massage does to provide relief. In this five-week study, 20 adults with fibromyalgia received either massage therapy or relaxation therapy twice weekly. The massage was a combination of several types, including Swedish, Shiatsu, and Trager, all using moderate pressure. People in the other group went to progressive muscle relaxation sessions. "Both groups showed a decrease in anxiety and depressed mood immediately after the first and last therapy sessions," writes Field.

The big difference showed up in their sleep, she adds. Only the massage therapy group reported an increase in hours of sleep and a decrease in their sleep movements, as well as lower levels of the chemical messenger for pain -- called "substance P."

