

## **Massage for The Foot – Don't Underestimate its Importance!**

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Your feet are the “foundation” of your body. When they aren't happy, areas above them successively become unhappy as well (the legs, the knees, the hips, the spine, the neck).

Each foot has approximately 33 muscles, 26 bones, and too many nerve endings to count and also is home to proprioceptors which help to “tell you” where you are in space and time and have much to do with balance. There are many wonderful websites and books that can give you in-depth information but for the purposes of this article, I will keep it simple.

As the song says, “the toe bone's connected to the foot bone; the foot bone's connected to the leg bone ....etc. From a massage therapy perspective and your foot's function, this means that when your legs are tight, your feet are affected. So while massaging the foot feels absolutely wonderful and is good for you, to really affect the function of the foot one must also pay attention to the leg muscles that attach in the feet. (Ask me to see pictures when you are in the office if you desire.)

Many conditions can affect the feet. While almost all can benefit from massage therapy, there are some conditions that require either surgery or orthopedic help in addition to massage. Massage generally works well and can help with overuse syndromes such as plantar fasciitis. In addition to receiving massage, it is important that the person understands the need to rest and heal and do “homework”. It is most important that they stop, at least temporarily until healing takes place, the offending activity(ies). Many times in the case of plantar fasciitis, simply adopting good stretching practices of the legs will keep the situation from reoccurring once healing has taken place.

Tight muscles can contribute to over-pronation or supination of your feet. Getting a good shoe, and if you are a runner or walker, changing those shoes regularly can make a difference as well but proper stretching is a must for everyone!

Massaging your own feet on a regular basis can help with circulation and flexibility. Because most of us wear shoes that do not “give” when we walk and because we walk on hard surfaces such as concrete and asphalt, our feet are not allowed the movement they were designed to have. I am a big supporter of going barefooted but there are people who have certain conditions and or very unstable arches who should not go barefooted. However, as a general rule even those individuals can benefit from regular massage and short periods of going barefooted.

On a completely different note, reflexology massage of the feet can affect **all areas of the body**. For those not familiar with reflexology, it is the practice of working reflex points on the soles of the feet (and sometimes the hands) that correspond to a “map” of the organs and different zones of the body. I have had some success in helping those with specific conditions with a combination of regular massage and reflexology. As always, I try to teach them things that they can do regularly at home to gain the most benefit.

So, the next time you schedule a massage, let us know that you want to spend some extra time on your feet and legs and to share with you during your session some things that you can do at home to maintain your feet. One of the best massage sessions I personally ever had was to get an hour of massage to my feet and legs. It allowed for very slow and in-depth work to the small muscles and to my overworked joints.

So, be kind to your feet. Soak them, do self massage and take them to your therapist's on a regular basis. They will thank you and so will the rest of your body.

