

## Check Out Chair Massage

### You Deserve a Break in Your Busy Day

Cathy Ulrich

Ever been curious about the chair massage area at the mall? Or wondered why your company offers massages in the conference room on certain days? Does it seem strange people want to get massages in an odd-looking chair during a busy workday? Well, maybe they're on to something. In fact, a small investment in a chair massage session can lead to a significant pay-off.

Chair massage--also called seated or on-site massage--provides a host of benefits, including reducing stress, improving mental clarity, and enhancing work performance. And the time investment is minimal: short five-, ten- or fifteen-minute sessions can often do the trick.

### During the Work Day

In short, this study shows what chair massage enthusiasts have known for some time: even a short massage can help relax tight muscles and remind the body to breathe. Although full-body massages are optimal, taking time out for one in the middle of the workday can lull you to sleep, and it can be difficult to schedule it into your day. On the other hand, a chair massage during an afternoon break may be a better alternative, particularly when you need to be energized, so you can better focus for late-day meetings or evening responsibilities. Besides, the short massage session time--often the same as your coffee break--keeps you from

*"Always remember that the future comes one day at a time."*

-Dean Acheson



Productivity increase and stress reduction are both benefits of chair massage in the office.

In a study done at the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami, researchers found that when participants got a fifteen-minute chair massage just twice a week, their anxiety levels were lower, their brain waves proved they were more relaxed and alert, and their stress levels were measurably reduced. The study also showed improved speed and accuracy on math computations.

stressing about being away from work too long.

You don't have to undress, you don't need the privacy of a table massage, and you're ready to get back to work feeling refreshed.

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### Office Hours and Contact

**Rad Handz Massage Therapy**  
**Julie A. Keltner, CMT**  
**916-714-0764 Salon**  
**www.radhandz.com**  
**jkeltner\_cmt@yahoo.com**  
**Monday - Saturday**

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Chair massage can also be a great introduction into the world of bodywork. If you've always wondered why some people are adamant about getting massages, or if you've been trying to explain to a friend or coworker why bodywork is so wonderful, chair massage is an excellent way to get a sampling.

## The Massage Chair

The key to comfort for on-site massages is the specially tailored chair. It's important you feel fully supported and at ease so you can relax for your session. With pads to support your face, chest, arms, pelvis, and knees, a massage chair is surprisingly comfortable. And the chair's design puts you in a position that relieves tension even before the therapist starts working.

Massage chairs are fully adjustable so your practitioner can tailor the chair specifically to your body with just the release of a few levers. The unique design allows your therapist to easily access areas on your body--such as the neck, shoulders, and back--that may be the tightest.

## Is It Effective?

You may wonder how a massage can be effective when the practitioner works through your clothes and without oils.

Chair massage has its roots in a centuries-old Japanese massage technique called amma. A predecessor to the better-known shiatsu, amma is done while seated, and therapists are trained to work specifically on the body's pressure points. Pressure point work, especially on the areas made accessible by the position of the massage chair, can free muscles and relieve stress and tight tissues without working directly on the skin. Therapists are skilled at palpating and working through clothes. In minutes, you feel relaxed, alert, and comfortable as your tension melts away. And, since no oils or lotions are used for chair massage, you can go right back to your day without feeling like you need to shower.

## Your Trouble Spots

Once you decide how long you want your chair massage session to last, your therapist will adjust the routine for maximum effectiveness. These sessions can be very beneficial in treating

work-related issues, such as repetitive stress conditions and muscle tightness caused from sitting in front of a computer.

Be sure to tell your massage therapist of specific concerns you have, such as carpal tunnel syndrome or shoulder or neck stiffness. Your practitioner may suggest a longer session for your next visit to fully address your needs.

## What's the Cost?

Chair massage is an economical bodywork option because the sessions are relatively short.

Typically, a therapist charges about a dollar a minute. While tipping is common practice, practitioners do not automatically expect it. Chair massage enthusiasts will tell you \$15 is an excellent investment in your health--and it feels great.

## Talk To Your Employer

More and more companies are offering chair massages for their employees. Increased productivity and employee appreciation are just a couple of the benefits acknowledged by management. Some companies pay for the services, while others provide space for chair massage and employees pick up their own tabs.

If your company doesn't already offer chair massage, ask your human resources director if it's possible to bring this service into the office. Whether your employer pays for it or you do, you win, because you're able to make it through a stressful week a little more relaxed.

If you encounter a chair massage opportunity at work, at a local fair, or grocery store, do yourself a favor and sign up. You'll be happy you did.



The specially designed massage chair allows practitioners to access chronically tense areas.

# Massage for Your Teenager?

## Bodywork Can Ease Adolescent Angst

While teens may be less likely than their parents to go to a massage therapist, there are plenty of reasons why this age group should be encouraged to give it a try. The benefits of massage are well documented, among them relief of muscle tension, lowered stress hormones, increased sense of relaxation, improved immune function, and even a heightened ability to concentrate, according to studies conducted by the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine. But for teenagers, there's an additional payback.

The teenage body is in the midst of transformation -- exponential growth and development in a rapid period of time. On the physical side, teens may be at increased risk for aches, pains, and injury. Many teens strain their bodies with competitive sports, get erratic sleep, and consume a less-than-optimal diet. Massage can help muscles recover from overuse, and help balance the body and maintain that stability.

Perhaps even more crucial, teen massage can help improve body image and sleep patterns, and contribute to decreased depression, anxiety, and stress. This keeps a teen connected to her body, even as it morphs in confounding ways. "Many teens are self-conscious, and not happy with their bodies," says Eeris Kallil, massage therapist and shiatsu instructor at the Boulder College of Massage Therapy, in Colorado. "Massage can help teens stay grounded." Bodywork has also been reported to help mediate eating disorders, a growing concern among teens.

Another potential plus: A beneficial, therapeutic relationship can develop between bodyworkers and teenagers during the years when adolescents need adult confidantes, but keep parents at a distance. The practitioner can become a supportive, trusted adult in a teen's life. And the session itself, according to Kallil, can be a way to deal with all the physical and emotional turmoil of this tender age.



Massage eases teen depression and anxiety.

# Massage for Seniors

## Bodywork Improves Quality of Life

Almost 35 million Americans are age 65 or older, and about 2,000 more reach this age every day. As the U.S. demographic shifts to an older population, it's important to find ways of helping our elders maintain their health and vitality. Massage for seniors is gaining importance as an alternative therapy to increase quality of life, and many massage therapists are getting special training to better serve this growing population.

### SENIORS' SPECIAL NEEDS

While similar in technique to other forms of massage, geriatric massage considers the special needs of the elderly. The specialty trained practitioner knows about positioning for greatest comfort and will often have

the client rest in the same position for the entire massage. Mobility challenges may dictate the massage be done in a bed or wheelchair. The therapist may also work both sides of the body at the same time to enhance body awareness, or only work hands and feet, if the client prefers. Sessions may be limited to 30 to 45 minutes, as older clients often do better with shorter, more frequent, massages.

The geriatric massage therapist is aware of health issues associated with aging and how to safely work with this type of client and with associated physicians. Consequently, the practitioner is able to individualize the massage service based on the client's health, mobility, and comfort level.

### BENEFITS OF GERIATRIC MASSAGE

A recent study conducted at the Weaver's Tale Retreat Center in Oregon looked at the effects of massage for elderly clients. The results of the two-year study showed that participants experienced a decrease in breathing rate of 50 percent and an improvement in range of motion, posture, body awareness, skin color, and muscle tone. Furthermore, it is well documented that caring touch benefits emotional well-being in seniors -- a population at greater risk of suffering from depression.

Massage therapy can add to the quality of a senior's life, both physically and emotionally. Consider booking a session for someone you love, and make a difference in their life.

*"It is easier to  
forgive an enemy  
than to forgive a  
friend."*

-William Blake

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Julie A. Keltner, CMT  
(916) 714-0764  
(916) 730-9011  
jkeltner\_cmt@yahoo.com  
www.radhandz.com

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## Rad Handz Massage Therapy

8703 Elk Grove Blvd.  
Elk Grove, CA 95624



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